

The Reverend  
Jonathan  
Ashley House

AMELIA F. MILLER

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The Reverend Jonathan Ashley House



THE ASHLEY HOUSE. After Restoration.

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# The Reverend Jonathan Ashley House

*Deerfield, Massachusetts*

By Amelia F. Miller



*HERITAGE FOUNDATION*

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“I understand why I dislike innovation that comports removal or out-and-out destruction of buildings that I have got used to, of streets to which I had not only visually but muscularly got habituated. But why should I be distressed that the future will not miss them? Perhaps it is that we attach our own survival (in a measure at least) to things looking the way we have known them and that we die again with their disappearance and their replacement with other things that our ghosts could not recognize?”

From THE PASSIONATE SIGHTSEER by Bernard Berenson  
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# Foreword

STANDING at the northern end of the main street of Old Deerfield, Massachusetts, the eighteenth century home of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley has been a museum since 1948. Rescued from a site on the back part of the Ashley homelot, where it had been moved in 1869 and there used for a barn, this two story gambrel roofed house was restored by Mr. and Mrs. Henry N. Flynt and refurnished to resemble the former home of Parson Ashley. Now the property of the Heritage Foundation the house has consistently been a favorite of all those who visit Deerfield.

Recognizing the need for a definitive record of the Ashley House, a study of its architectural history and subsequent restoration as well as a history of Parson Ashley and his descendants, who continued to live on the homelot until 1945, the Trustees of the Heritage Foundation are grateful to the Robert Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute of Williamstown, Massachusetts, for a grant which has made this publication possible.

In addition to both Mr. and Mrs. Flynt, whose advice and confidence during the research and writing has been of immeasurable help, the contributions of several others deserve particular acknowledgement. Mr. Bruce McClellan of Lawrenceville, New Jersey, generously made available for unrestricted use his manuscript biography of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, *Grapes and Thorns*, which infinitely simplified the task of evaluating and interpreting the theological aspects of the minister's life. The notes and measured drawings made by the illustrator of this book, Mr. Gillett Griffin, while he was a student at Deerfield Academy, have rendered the description of the house before restoration far more accurate. The assistance of Mr. William E. Gass, contractor in charge of the restoration, has been indispensable. Mrs. Bartlett W. Boyden, who for eight years has been an exceptional guide in the Ashley House, has shared her enthusiasm and her remarkable knowledge of the house and the collection. Dr. Abbott L. Cummings, Assistant Director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, has given advice concerning the architectural analysis of the house and valuable suggestions regarding the entire manuscript.

Finally, to Mr. William L. Warren, Assistant Director of the Connecticut Historical Society, to Mr. Robert W. McGlynn and Mr. John H. Suitor, both of Deerfield Academy, for detailed criticism of the manuscript, the author is greatly indebted.

AMELIA F. MILLER

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CHAPTER I

# The Tobacco Warehouse



# The Tobacco Warehouse

**A**MID a complex of barns, sheds and stables, there stood in 1945, the phantom-like derelict of the once stately mansion of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, eighteenth century parson of Deerfield, Massachusetts. Supplanted in 1869 by a newer dwelling, this old home had been hauled to the rear of its original site on the town street, gutted of its interior fineness and submitted to humiliating use as a tobacco warehouse. Boards were nailed over its windows and rotted lumber lay piled about it. An impudent sapling pear tree had pushed its way up among sturdy weeds and dried corn stalks directly before the front entrance.

When planning his new house in 1869, Mr. Jonathan Ashley, a great-grandson of the Parson, had elected to move this home of his ancestors rather than to demolish it, but dominating motives of preservation cannot honestly be attributed to him. It is true that in 1847 an unsuccessful attempt had been made to prevent the destruction of the "Old Indian House," which had stood facing the Deerfield Common in 1704 when the town was attacked by French and Indians, and also true that Mr. Ashley must have been aware of the indignation of historic-minded citizens at its ultimate destruction. But in spite of such a previous incident, it is more likely that his motives in moving rather than tearing down his old house were of a far more practical nature.

Considering that in 1843 a fire had destroyed most of the Ashley out-buildings, that the old house was still solid and sound, and that Mr. Ashley was a prosperous farmer ever needful of storage space, his decision was probably almost entirely occasioned by Yankee thrift.

Furthermore, in 1869 most of America was looking forward to building, exploring and expanding. Infrequent attempts to preserve an ancient structure were premature and usually based on some association with a national hero or an outstanding event in history. Mr. Ashley's desire to build a fashionable new home was entirely characteristic of the energetic spirit of his times.

In the present century America has turned to look back, to study, evaluate, and appreciate her Colonial period. A growing consciousness

of and interest in our country's history and culture has led to the preservation and restoration of seventeenth and eighteenth century buildings which might otherwise be destroyed.

During the beginning of this era of reawakening, the old Ashley house stood neglected and abused. Barn swallows returned each spring to nest in its rafters. Yet it was not entirely forgotten. In 1899, a Mrs. J. A. Woodruff of Northampton made a special trip to Deerfield to see it. She wrote, "Mr. Ashley very kindly showed us what is standing of the old house with its heavy plank sides."<sup>1</sup>

By 1945, Mr. Frank L. Boyden, Headmaster of Deerfield Academy, needed additional dormitory space for his expanding enrollment. To meet his needs he purchased the nineteenth century Ashley house, but it was located at too great a distance from the campus to be convenient. Always mindful of the well-being of the town, as well as the Academy, he sought the advice of the President of his Board of Trustees, Mr. Henry N. Flynt.

For several years previous to this time Mr. and Mrs. Flynt's interests in Deerfield had been two-fold. Both had been generous benefactors of the Academy, and this close association with the school had soon led to an absorbing interest in the history of Deerfield and the beginning of a sustained effort to save for the town the many Colonial houses which still survived on the mile-long street. An historical publication reported, ". . . word began to go around that something was happening in Old Deerfield."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Frank Boyden had long hoped to see the old Ashley house returned to its original location. She suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Flynt visit it. At first glance, both instantly visualized the former grandeur of the old gambrel roofed house. In their minds, they stripped away the boards which lay over the windows, replaced the missing clapboards, rebuilt the tall, strengthening chimneys, and put together fragments of panelling which were scattered about inside.

They thought of more, too. They thought of the generations of people who had lived in this house: the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, composing lengthy sermons in his study, drinking tea in Tory defiance of the Non-Importation Act; they thought of his son, Elihu Ashley, a spirited youth, who settled down in the house to become one of the village doctors and selectmen; they thought of marriages and also funerals in the parlor, and of the black slaves, Jinny and Cato, serving the family



1. ASHLEY HOUSE. Front about 1912 when used for storing tobacco. Original panelling is visible through widened front entrance.

and farm. They saw panelled rooms once again filled with fine furniture, with objects for daily living and for daily survival.

Thus it came about that the needs of Deerfield Academy and the hopes of Helen and Henry Flynt to save the old house were resolved together.

The newer house was moved to a location nearer the Academy in 1945 and refitted for a dormitory.<sup>3</sup> Then the old Ashley House was brought back from the weeds and corn field, and carefully restored and refurnished in the style of the eighteenth century, the period when it was built and the period of its first occupant, the Reverend Jonathan Ashley. On May 4, 1948, it was opened to the public as a museum.<sup>4</sup>

Deerfield looks with gratitude and pride at the reclaimed Ashley House, a restoration of many facets. The house itself, structurally worth the attention of any student of architectural history, the out-

standing collection of furniture and decorative accessories—these alone make it an exceptional museum.

But the people of Deerfield know and the stranger instinctively senses that there is another dimension—the dimension of history. The Ashley House has a liveliness which stems from a consciousness of generations long past in time, of former occupants who participated in the political and religious events of Colonial New England, and who as a family tell the human story of courtship, child-bearing, financial struggle and domestic labor.

Restless spirits of the tobacco shed have been recalled.

C H A P T E R 2

The Parson, Jonathan Ashley



THE PARSON

# Jonathan Ashley

1712-1780

ALTHOUGH a man of whom no portrait likeness is thought to survive, and about whose appearance and character descriptions conflict, the Reverend Jonathan Ashley has become a legend in Deerfield. Everyone knows of him and of his house; most can testify that he was a fanatical Tory and can relate incidents of smuggling tea and of urgent pleas to support the King delivered from his pulpit; some even are aware that, as a theologian, he protested actively against the Great Awakening and the Reverend Jonathan Edwards of Northampton. Beyond this point, general knowledge of the man who ministered to the people of Deerfield for forty-eight years comes abruptly to a halt.<sup>1</sup>

Time has tended to erase the memory of Jonathan Ashley's youth. He is generally thought of today as an elderly man, the father of grown children as well as the father of a flock he must lead from sin to salvation.

His contemporary and theological antagonist, Jonathan Edwards, characterized him as, "a young gentleman of liberal education and notable abilities, a fluent speaker. . . ."<sup>2</sup> His successor in the church of Deerfield wrote, "Mr. Ashley was possessed of a strong and discerning mind, and a lively imagination. He was independent in his feelings and conduct. . . ."<sup>3</sup> When aged twenty-five his son, Elihu, commented that a certain matter would, "make him take Snuff & Groan more than ever. . . ."<sup>4</sup> One description, as early as 1747, calls him venerable,<sup>5</sup> while two accounts written in the nineteenth century, a generation after his death, speak of him as venerable, tall and well-proportioned.<sup>6</sup>

Westfield, Massachusetts, the town of Jonathan Ashley's birth on November 11, 1712, was also his home until 1726 when, at the age of fourteen, he left his father's farm and accompanied by three first cousins travelled down the Connecticut Valley to the recently founded college at New Haven called Yale. Considering that in the Ashley family there was no precedent for higher learning, it is remarkable that

the four Ashleys should take this step, and interesting also that the class into which they entered totaled only eighteen students.<sup>7</sup> Jonathan received his diploma from Yale in 1730.<sup>8</sup>

After a trial period in which he was hired to preach the doctrine for a few Sabbaths, Jonathan received a call to settle in Deerfield on April 10, 1732.<sup>9</sup> He was ordained on November 8, 1732, the ordination sermon being delivered by the Reverend William Williams of Hatfield, unofficial but accepted leader of the church in Hampshire County.<sup>10</sup>

Jonathan was only twenty years old when he first rode into the Deerfield street in 1732, filled with hope and ambition. Here was a church of great promise. In spite of the fact that the town was the northernmost and the westernmost frontier outpost of the Province of Massachusetts, its reputation was by no means obscure. A treacherous attack made on Deerfield in 1704 by French and Indians and a subsequent narrative of this ordeal written by Jonathan's predecessor, the Reverend John Williams,<sup>11</sup> had brought Deerfield to the attention of all New England.<sup>12</sup>

Jonathan was the first minister to be settled in Deerfield since the completion of a new meeting house. The most recently built in the county, it had been raised in the Spring of 1729, at which time the town voted, "that the Selectmen shall provide on the Town's charge a suitable quantity of Drink and Cake to be spent at the raising of the Meetinghouse."<sup>13</sup>

Measuring 40 by 50 feet, the meeting house stood on the Deerfield Common with its broad side facing the east mountain.<sup>14</sup> The main entrance was in the center of the east side. Across the front there were thirteen windows. Surmounted by a brass weather cock, a steeple rose from the center of a pitched roof.<sup>15</sup> On the inside, benches faced the pulpit which stood on the west side, directly opposite the main entrance. Galleries on three sides were supported by turned oak pillars with Ionic capitals.<sup>16</sup> The pulpit was 4 by 10 feet and was reached by seven steps. Over it an octagonal sounding board hung from an iron rod. A semi-circular projection in front of the pulpit served as a reading desk, which was covered by a green baize cushion trimmed with heavy fringe. The interior of the pulpit was lined with green baize held in place by brass nails, and curtains of the same fabric hung from a large window behind the pulpit.<sup>17</sup>

Although from time to time through the years improvements were



2. MAP OF NEW ENGLAND about 1730. Meeting houses mark the isolation of Deerfield and three other towns which lie on the Connecticut River.

made such as ornamental panelling, square pews and dark green paint to cover the woodwork, even in 1732, when Jonathan was settled, his meeting house was grander than that of any neighboring town.

The terms of Jonathan's settlement were generous. In addition to a sum of £300 granted for the purpose of "buying or building" a house, he was to receive an annual salary of £130 to be paid in silver, his fire-wood was to be provided by the town, and he was granted the use of the town houselot yearly.<sup>18</sup>

As the interpreter of God's will to the people of Deerfield, young Jonathan Ashley was perfectly aware that his voice would be authoritative in secular as well as spiritual matters. In accordance with the prevailing Calvinistic ideology, all wordly events were thought to have a direct relationship to God's pleasure or displeasure. Indian attacks, droughts, crop failures, and sickness were taken as God's punishments for a deviation from the straight and narrow path. Correspondingly, the people of Deerfield and those of other towns in the Connecticut Valley depended on words spoken from the pulpit to guide their daily lives, punish immorality and teach scriptural commandments.

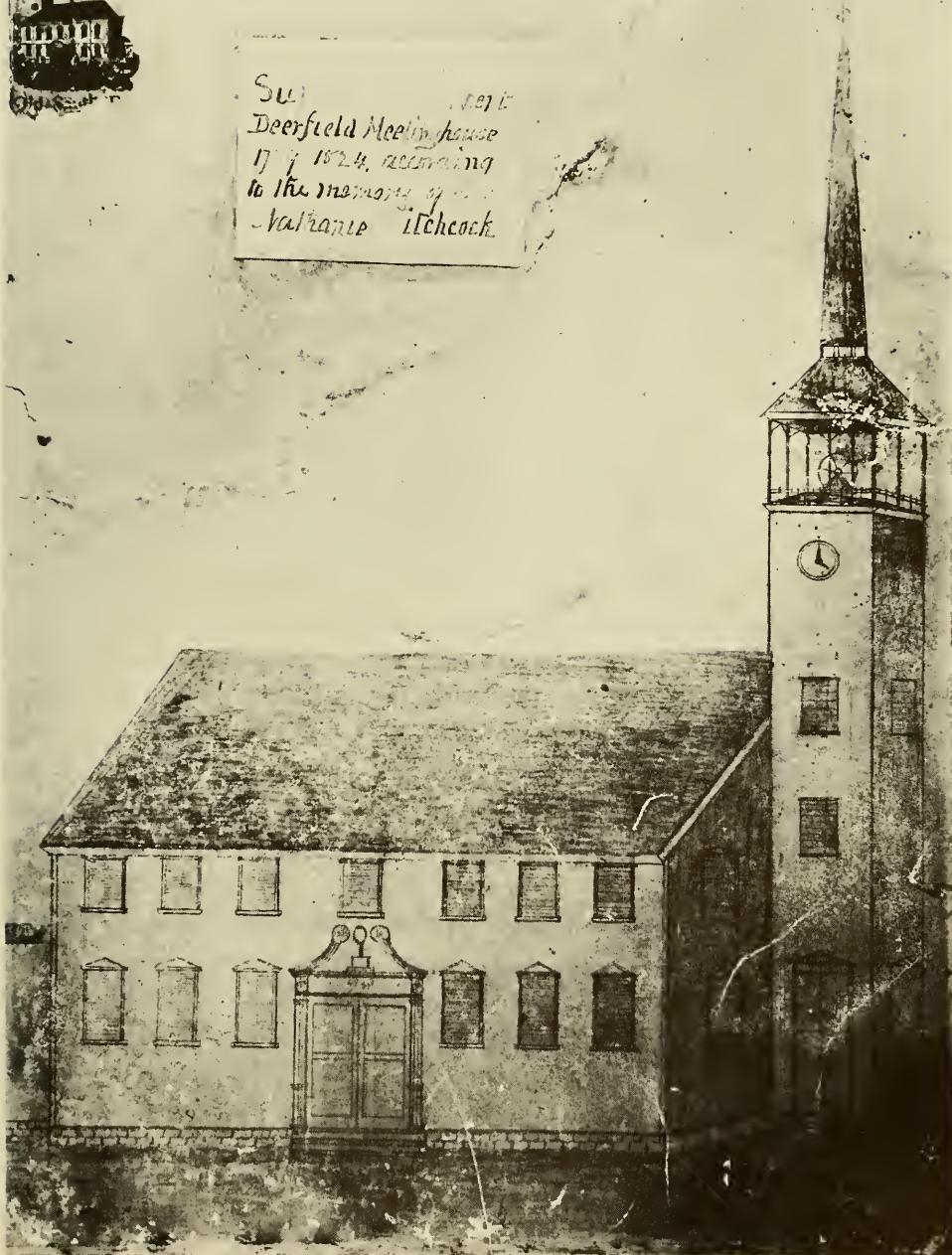
In 1733, with funds provided in his settlement, Jonathan bought a houselot at the north end of the Deerfield street, which was to be the home of the Ashleys for six generations.<sup>19</sup> It has been suggested that during his first years in Deerfield he paid court to Sarah Williams, the youngest daughter of his predecessor. In 1736 Sarah died of causes unrecorded,<sup>20</sup> but town gossips whispered that it was of a broken heart, for in 1736 Jonathan married Dorothy Williams, Sarah's second cousin, a daughter of the Reverend William Williams of Hatfield. In the successful culmination of this suit, Jonathan allied himself to one of the most influential and aristocratic families in the entire Connecticut Valley.

Jonathan Ashley was twenty-four years old in 1736, and his situation seemed good to him. He was settled in an important church; he had been joined to the Williams family by marriage; he had bought himself a house; and the very nature of his vocation insured him a prominent place in Deerfield society. The Westfield husbandman's son could not but foresee a promising future.

In 1735 Deerfield was selected as the place for a conference between Governor Belcher and the Caghawaga and other Indian tribes, as well as for the ordination of Mr. John Sergeant as missionary to the Housa-



S. W. <sup>Sept</sup>  
Deerfield Meeting house  
1771 1824, according  
to the memory of  
Walter H. Ilchcock



3. 1729 MEETING HOUSE, DEERFIELD. This drawing done from memory after the meeting house was pulled down in 1824 shows a steeple and scrolled doorway constructed during renovations of 1768.

tonic Indians at Stockbridge.<sup>21</sup> This recognition of Deerfield and indirect recognition of him as the spiritual leader must have seemed to Jonathan an auspicious beginning to his career.

During the same year Jonathan received eighty new members into his church, an equally favorable omen for his future.<sup>22</sup> What he did not know in 1735 was that this startling increase in the size of his congregation marked the beginning of a series of revivals, since called the "Great Awakening." Ironically, these revivals soon created bitter dissension among the clergy on the subjects of admission to the church and of eligibility for communion.

In the seventeenth century a system had been devised to increase church enrollment. Known as the "half-way" method, it permitted church membership, but not communion privileges, to those who had not publicly confessed conversion or, as it was called, "owned the covenant." The Reverend Solomon Stoddard of Northampton had carried this scheme one step further and had allowed "half-way" members to participate in the sacrament. Jonathan Ashley followed Stoddard's practice; in fact, his church record makes no distinction between "half-way" and full communicants.

Jonathan did not oppose the underlying motive of the revival; a young, recently settled minister, he was as anxious as anyone to increase the membership of his church. Shortly, however, he began to object to the revivals on other grounds. Conversions relying on a deliberate stimulation of the emotions disregarded the God-given power of reason and struck at the heart of his Congregational orthodoxy. Furthermore, when arguments arose among the clergy, he was practical enough to realize that internal controversy, bitter and sustained, could threaten their leadership. Finally, the very core of Jonathan's nature sought order and symmetry. Disturbing forces which might upset the even pattern of things were always abhorrent to him. In a sermon he said, "The desires of the Soul can as well be satisfied with a triangle or a circle as well as with a farm or fine house."<sup>23</sup>

The Awakening was greatly stimulated by the arrival of George Whitefield, who having gained momentum in Boston travelled triumphantly through New England. He preached at Northampton and Hadley in 1740.<sup>24</sup> The firm hands of the Reverend William Williams and the Reverend Jonathan Ashley probably prevented his being invited to either Hatfield or Deerfield.<sup>25</sup>

In these years of the Awakening, Jonathan Ashley attained a modest degree of recognition outside his home in Deerfield. He travelled about the valley; was guest preacher in such important towns as Longmeadow and Suffield,<sup>26</sup> and was even invited to preach in Boston.

Two sermons of this period were published; in both he spoke out against the revivals and Whitefield. The first was delivered on November 25, 1741, at the ordination of John Norton as first minister of Fall Town, now Bernardston, Massachusetts. It was entitled, "The United Endeavours and earnest Prayers of Ministers and People, to promote the Great Design of the Ministry."<sup>27</sup> The second, delivered a year later on November 28, 1742, from the pulpit of the Brattle Street Church in Boston, bore the title, "The great Duty of CHARITY, considered and applied."<sup>28</sup>

By 1744 the tide of the Awakening had somewhat subsided, but a new and even more burning issue arose for Jonathan Ashley. In Northampton, twenty miles south of Deerfield, the Reverend Jonathan Edwards, a first cousin of Jonathan Ashley's wife, denied the sacraments to "half-way" members of his church, permitting communion only to those who had made full and public professions of regeneracy. Confusion, partisanship and general ill-feeling followed this action. The quarrel finally culminated in the dismissal of Edwards from Northampton,<sup>29</sup> and Jonathan Ashley was called upon to preach in that town to heal the rift.<sup>30</sup> In spite of Ashley's efforts, bitterness existed long after.

While endeavoring to maintain order and uphold his religious beliefs during the Awakening, Jonathan was not himself exempt from God's punishing hand. On March 17, 1738, he buried his first born son, William, less than a year old. From his pulpit the following Sunday he delivered an obviously personal and touching message, using as his text the story of Abraham and Isaac, and reflecting the sadness of a bereft father.

How ready are we to reflect when they are gone upon their pleasing forms. We call to mind their pretty actions, and it seems hard to lose them forever and nevermore be diverted with them . . . Nothing will give men so lively a sense of death as to see a husband, a parent, a brother, or sister go down to the dark and silent grave.<sup>31</sup>

In 1742 Jonathan was thirty and lost his third son, another William, just two months before he preached in Boston. But by 1745 he had

three living children to maintain, Jonathan, Dorothy and Elizabeth, and economic inflations forced him to appeal to the town for an adjustment of his finances.

To the Inhabitants of Deerfield . . .

this is a troublesome way for me to have my Salary to fix every year paper Money is So fluctuating I Should be Glad you would pay me My Salary in Silver as you may See you have obliged yourselves to do if you look into your agreement with me . . .

I am Your friend & Servant J. Ashley.<sup>32</sup>

Although a matter of momentous concern to Jonathan, it is doubtful that these theological quarrels or even his own financial embarrassments greatly interfered with the daily existence of the people of Deerfield. Far more imminent were the constant threats brought about by the French and the heathen allies they successfully cultivated. From 1740 to 1759 there were only six years of peace. In 1744, a vote was passed to build mounts or watch towers at several strategic sites in the town. The Ashley homelot was selected for one because of its vantage point overlooking the north meadows.<sup>33</sup> Among others, Joseph Barnard and his negro man, Prince, charged four days work to the town in late May for scoring timber for the mounts.<sup>34</sup>

Many Deerfield men enlisted and went off to the wars: John Hawks, Selah Barnard, Elijah Williams and Doctor Thomas Williams. Those who did not leave home to fight served in other capacities. Joseph Barnard patrolled the forests and recorded in his day book in June of 1746, "Province of Massachusetts Bay Dr [Debtor] to a hors to Hoosock after a wounded man & to Search for ded Indians four days."<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Ashley billeted a certain Eldad Barber who came to Deerfield to "manage the grate gun."<sup>36</sup> Danger was never farther away than the nearest hay field or woodlot.

In 1754, Samuel Cunniball was paid £4-13-4 for, "Going to Boston with a Horse and Cart for ammunition."<sup>37</sup> Guns, snowshoes and provisions were also carted from the coast to Deerfield there to be supplied to the troops. Jonathan's brother-in-law, Israel Williams, was leader of the King's Militia in the northern Hampshire regiment, and his friend and classmate at Yale, Oliver Partridge of Hatfield, was made a colonel.

Jonathan Ashley considered these wars to be Holy Wars; the French were Papists and the Indians were inventions of Satan placed on earth



4. NORTH MEADOWS, DEERFIELD. Over these meadows in 1744 sentries looked north from a watch tower on the Ashley homelot.

to torment his people. Setbacks and defeats were accepted by New Englanders as God's means of punishment. In 1755, Jonathan preached to the soldiers about to set out for Crown Point, "Be strong in God's cause and conduct yourselves like men, for you go to fight enemies of the Church of God."<sup>38</sup> On September 8, 1755, there was an ambush near Lake George, since known as the "Bloody Morning Scout." Colonel Ephraim Williams, brother of Deerfield's Doctor Thomas Williams, was killed along with many others. When the news reached Deerfield, Jonathan told his congregation,

God does not always go out with the armies of his people—he may be so provoked with their sins that he will not go out with them . . . Every General ought to be a David, every soldier a saint, every citizen a penitent. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Although Jonathan prayed continually from his pulpit and at night during his family prayers for peace to descend on his valley, he was not

one to avoid a fight once it was inevitable. Just as he had actively opposed the Awakening and Edwards, during the French Wars he searched for a means by which he could personally deal a blow to these enemies of his church who prayed for the Pope and served the King of France. Such an opportunity was revealed to him when his friend, Sergeant John Hawks, returned from Canada in 1747 where he had arranged for the release of the Reverend John Norton of Bernardston, Massachusetts, who had been taken captive.

Hawks spoke of the kindness and helpfulness of Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Pe, Superior of the Canadian Missions and the Rector of the College of Quebec. On the pretext of thanking the French priest, Jonathan began an amazing correspondence which was to last until 1753 whereby he attempted to undermine the enemy by converting the Jesuit leader from his Roman faith.<sup>40</sup>

In his first letter, which was presumably carried to Canada by Sergeant Hawks, he prepared for a future attack.

I long for the time when you and I may be of the same sentiments in religion and all divisions among those who profess themselves Christians may come to a final end. . . .<sup>41</sup>

Since Jonathan knew no French the correspondence for the most part was carried on in Latin. Eight of an implied eleven letters have survived, in which the two religious men discussed theological problems, each polite, each armed with a thorough doctrinal background, but each convinced of his own right.

In 1749, in a subsequent letter, Jonathan wrote,

I see many things in the Roman church, and in the established church of Britain, very offensive to me. Indulgences, holy water, prayers directed to the spirits of dead saints, prayers for the dead, with many other things not found in the holy scriptures, are in your church. . . .<sup>42</sup>

But the Frenchman replied,

I shall ever continue inviolably attached to that church which Jesus Christ has built upon Peter (Mat. 16:18) whose successors for more than seventeen hundred years have governed it even to our days, in an uninterrupted succession. . . .<sup>43</sup>

In 1752 Saint-Pe wrote again,

You advise, my dear Sir, that I free the populace from deceptions. Oh that I could! I would free you first of all, then your people, finally everybody. . . .<sup>44</sup>

Uncorruptible in his Catholic convictions, Saint-Pe's last letter dated 1753, is obviously an attempt to terminate the five-year correspondence; it indicated plainly that Jonathan was unsuccessful so far as achieving his purpose. But this failure in no way detracts from the courage and ingenuity displayed by the Deerfield parson in undertaking this unique venture. "This is the only evidence that has come to light showing the conflict of New France with New England in the mid-eighteenth century carried on in direct, two-sided theological correspondence."<sup>45</sup>

March 21, 1759, according to the Reverend John Taylor, was the last day there was "mischief done by the enemy, in the Western frontiers, in the last French War."<sup>46</sup> Edwards had departed from Northampton and Jonathan Ashley could look forward to tranquil, constructive days. He was a middle aged man of forty-seven. His oldest son, Jonathan, was twenty and had graduated from Yale; his second son, Elihu, was nine; his youngest son, Solomon, was only five, and he had also three daughters: Betsey, Dolly and Charissa.

Peace on the western borders encouraged new settlers with a new feeling of security and independence. In spite of threats encountered when Baptists began to move into the valley, the next fifteen years were the most contented in Jonathan's life. Times were good; God was not in a punishing mood.

Major Elijah Williams built himself a fine new house; Captain Thomas Dickinson enlarged his; Jonathan Ashley altered and improved his house. Tradesmen set up shops along the road that led from the Deerfield Common west past the burying ground over the river and toward Albany. Families ventured away from the protection of Deerfield and new towns were set off: Conway, Greenfield and Shelburne. Merchandise instead of ammunition was carted from Boston. Deerfield women could select fine cloth and have fans and ribbons. Deerfield men could purchase English riding whips and pleasurable books such as, "Deane Swift's Works" and "The Foole of Quality." Once Jonathan

was the exclusive owner of a carriage in Deerfield; now there were a number of them.

But these years between the French Wars and the Revolution also brought a gradual but persistent decline in Jonathan's authority. The hardworking frontiersman found that his prosperity related less and less to heavenly intercessions, and, correspondingly, the words of Heaven's representatives were less and less forceful.

Even though the Reverend Jonathan Ashley could not have realized it, he, himself, now in 1761 one of the leading religious men in western Massachusetts, embodied the new independent, energetic thinking of the times when he became involved in a project to establish a college in nearby Hatfield.

The idea for this college did not spring full-blown into Jonathan's mind in 1761, however. That the problem of education in the valley was a matter of concern to Jonathan at least by 1755, the year the last French War began, is suggested by his close relationship to two men both of whom made wills in that year leaving considerable funds to support schools in the western part of the Province.

The first of these men was Samuel Barnard, a merchant of Deerfield and Salem, who was married to Elizabeth Williams, sister of Colonel Israel Williams and of Jonathan's wife, Dorothy Williams Ashley. In 1755, Barnard bequeathed 400 acres of land north of Hadley for an endowment for a "proposed" academy at Hadley, Massachusetts.<sup>47</sup>

The other was Colonel Ephraim Williams who, having recently moved from Stockbridge to Hatfield, drew up a will on July 22, 1755, "on my March in the Expedition Against Crown Point."<sup>48</sup> A first cousin of Israel Williams and Dorothy Ashley, Ephraim provided funds for schools in Hampshire County in two clauses of his will,<sup>49</sup> the most important of which concerned the residue of his estate. The will stated, "My Lands not yet disposed of Shall be Sold at the Discretion of my Executors within five years After an Established peace, & the Interest . . . shall be Appropriated towards the Support & Maintenance of a Free School (in a Township west of Fort Massachusetts). . . ." He stipulated, however, that the town should be named Williamstown, and that if the provisos were not complied with, this residue could be directed by his executors to "Some pious And Charitable Uses."<sup>50</sup>

That these two men so closely related to Jonathan Ashley should both leave substantial legacies for educational purposes in 1755 seems

far more than coincidental, and, in view of his later efforts in 1761 after the peace, certainly points to Jonathan as instrumental in promoting the bequests.

At any rate, if Jonathan did not actually suggest the bequests, he was surely aware of them and in 1761 when a peace was established he began to take active steps to establish a college in Hatfield, Massachusetts, which he proposed to call Queens College. That his plan was undoubtedly an outgrowth of the formerly proposed academy at Hadley is certain, since proceeds from the 400 acre Barnard grant were to be available to the Trustees of Queens College.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, no matter what the source of the plan, credit is due to Jonathan Ashley for reviving interest in the earlier proposals and for acting as the moving force in the venture in 1761.

Furthermore, credit is due to Jonathan for recognizing the increasing need for educated men in the western part of the province and for being aware that many potential students in the valley were unable to attend Yale and Harvard for purely geographical reasons. Credit is due him also for broadening the previous conception of an academy at Hadley and for seeking an institution of full college status. Above all, for devising a scheme whereby financial requirements to endow and operate the projected college could be met, Jonathan Ashley showed exceptional acumen.

In 1761 Jonathan recognized the possibility of endowing Queens College by diverting funds left by Colonel Ephraim Williams for establishing a free school near Fort Massachusetts. This he proposed to do by invoking the provision in Ephraim's will which permitted the executors to direct the funds for the free school to other "pious and Charitable Uses" if the school were not established in a town to be called Williamstown. No steps whatsoever had been taken to found the free school and fortuitously Jonathan's brother-in-law, Israel Williams, was one of the executors. Israel agreed to cooperate with Ashley's plan to divert the funds and subsequently the clergy of Hampshire County also gave their approval and support.

Matters progressed smoothly until the final stages when unexpectedly the whole affair was blocked by the refusal of the General Court to grant a charter. Apparently the influence of Harvard was too great, for in 1762, the Harvard Overseers, who also largely controlled the Council, voted, ". . . This board are of opinion that the establishment

of another college tho' only as a Collegiate School within this province will be greatly prejudicial to Harvard College. . . ."<sup>52</sup>

Governor Francis Bernard, sympathetic with the plans for Queens College, had originally granted the necessary charter only to be forced to withdraw it when it was pointed out that such prerogatives were not within his jurisdiction. But Ashley refused to give up and determined to appeal directly to the Crown. Hoping to persuade Lord Jeffrey Amherst to intercede and present a petition to the King, Jonathan Ashley set out for New York to explain the project to the General. On this mission he was armed with a note of introduction from Colonel Israel Williams.

Our meanness as well as our situation forbids our approaching the throne but by others. By your Excellency's powerful application, considering your just right to favours, cou'd you, Sir, be prevailed with to interest your self in our behalf, we don't doubt of success . . . Mr. Ashley will lay our petition to his Majesty before you, and fully open the whole we have in view.<sup>53</sup>

But Jonathan Ashley never saw Amherst. On the day before Christmas in 1762, he had travelled as far as Norwalk, Connecticut, where he learned of a smallpox epidemic in New York. His fears of the disease outweighed even his ambitions for Queens College, and he went no farther. Written correspondence which followed indicated, however, that Amherst was unwilling to become involved in the matter.

Bitterly disappointed but still persistent, Ashley tried other means of approaching the throne, but finally in 1764 advice was sent from London that, ". . . perhaps Hampshire School [sic] may be safer than Hampshire College would have been. . . ."<sup>54</sup>

Queens College was never chartered. The 400 acre Barnard bequest reverted to the heirs,<sup>55</sup> but an unchartered academy was established at Hatfield, to which Jonathan Ashley sent his second son, Elihu.

Parson Ashley had failed in his plan to establish Queens College, just as he had failed to convert the French priest. But seen purely in terms of Ashley's interest in stimulating education, the attempt is important, the failure irrelevant.

Deerfield by the 1760's was no longer a frontier outpost but one of the well established and sophisticated towns in the Connecticut Valley.

ley, the town to which newer settlements looked for supplies, culture, entertainment and general guidance. It was no longer an isolated community; visitors constantly arrived in Deerfield from towns far down the river: Hartford, New London and Middletown, as well as from the coastal cities and from relatively young towns to the west in the Berkshire hills. Nor did Deerfield men remain exclusively on their own land; they, too, travelled about, visiting, doing business and exchanging ideas.

When important persons came to Deerfield it was presumed that the minister would provide them lodgings. They would not expect to be crowded into a chamber at a local tavern. When the Reverend John Emerson of Northfield came to Deerfield, Parson Ashley invited his two oldest sons to dine with the guest on a "fat roast pig."<sup>56</sup> When the Reverend Jonathan Leavitt of Charlemont determined to lodge for the night, the Parson's son, Elihu, readily shared his bed with the visitor.<sup>57</sup> Salmon, veal, custard, baked bear, Indian pudding and racoon were served at the Ashley table. On the other hand, when a member of the Ashley family visited abroad, such as in the Partridge home in Hatfield, Colonel Oliver Partridge entertained his guest with, "Stories which were very agreeable respecting y<sup>e</sup> last war,"<sup>58</sup> and offered him a fine veal dinner.

Even in these contented years, the financial strain of having to lodge important travellers was an added burden to Parson Ashley, who was never free from the mundane problem of adjusting his fixed salary to fluctuating economic crises. In 1760, he wrote again to the town.

I ask nothing extraordinary for the Support of my family: I am Commanded to be given to Hospitality and the occasion therefor increases: and it would not be for your credit y<sup>t</sup> I should shut my doors and refuse entertainment.<sup>59</sup>

The Reverend Jonathan Ashley had various methods of augmenting his salary, however. As early as 1747 he had begun to board young men at his home and to prepare them for the ministry or for college. Mr. Eleazer May came on November 20, 1753, and on June 17 he "left the School."<sup>60</sup> In 1755, James Taylor studied with the Deerfield minister, and in 1760, Mr. Seth Phelps stayed 38 weeks and paid four shillings and eight pence per week. On December 17, 1766, Ashley wrote in his

book, "Seth Noble Came to live with me to study his Brother Thomas came with him & said that he & his Brothers would Satisfy me for his Living with me."<sup>61</sup>

Careful management of his affairs was always necessary. Parson Ashley sent a list of his expenses for one year to the town, calling it, "Computation of the Expenses of a family Consisting of a man a woman 4 children & a maid."<sup>62</sup> His largest single item was £125 for clothing, but food was the next. The Ashleys consumed 500 pounds of beef, 200 pounds of butter, 12 barrels of cider and 100 pounds of sugar in one year. Other foods listed were: wheat, pork, mutton, veal, fish, tea, chocolate, apples, turnips, Indian corn and malt. For pipes and tobacco the minister spent £4 a year and for books £15. It took 27 pounds of tallow to light the Ashleys' house.

In addition to providing for his own family, such as buying shoes for his children from the cobbler, David Crosbey,<sup>63</sup> Jonathan Ashley sent gifts to his mother in Westfield from time to time. He carefully recorded one such expenditure in his book. "Sent to my Honoured Mother Abigail Ashley 7lb of flax & 6lb & 11oz of wool."<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, he felt obliged to furnish his home and his person in a manner in keeping with his genteel station. In 1753, he paid £4-10-0 for a hat, £1-10-0 for a neck cloth and £2-14-0 for a new tea pot.<sup>65</sup> The price of his hat alone equalled approximately nineteen weeks of tutoring a student.

Jonathan Ashley earned his living by means other than his intellect. Like all men of the valley, over and above his actual profession he was a farmer. Although he had colored slaves and hired men to help harvest a crop, Parson Ashley's own hands were calloused from raking hay; he, too, returned exhausted from the fields at sunset. His understanding of the husbandman's unceasing struggle to work the land and his appreciation of the natural loveliness of the Deerfield Valley are occasionally reflected in his sermons, as he endeavored to translate the ways of God into a language familiar to his people. He once reminded them that Satan was like a cunning fowler laying his snares,<sup>66</sup> and another time said, "The flourishing state of God's people [is] like grass and willows by the water course, . . ."<sup>67</sup>

Above and beyond all else, Jonathan Ashley knew from the day of his ordination in 1732 that his chief duty lay in a personal responsibility for the salvation of the people of Deerfield. He must see not

only that meeting was attended both morning and afternoon of the Sabbath, that the Sabbath was kept and that children were educated to the ways of God, but also that sinners were publicly chastised. His church record commemorates marriages, baptisms and deaths as well as confessions of theft, false witness, absence from communion, drunkenness, murder and fornication.<sup>68</sup>

His most effective and far reaching means of bringing God's word to his people was through his sermons. He told his congregation that, "Ministers must not be cold and lifeless in the Desk; but should be Flames of Fire, . . ."<sup>69</sup> An historian wrote in 1815 that, "his prayers always exhibited an ardor of devotion; and his sermons, though usually delivered with the aid of brief notes, but evidently the result of much reflection, were eloquent and impressive."<sup>70</sup>

On a bleak January morning as Jonathan climbed the seven steps to his pulpit in the drafty, unheated meeting house, he certainly knew he would be as cold as any of his congregation. Yet his procedure never varied. Comfort was unimportant. The people, "assembled at ten, and the clock would often strike eleven before the prayer was finished. He would then take his Bible, read his text, lay it aside, and looking straight forward, neither to the right nor to the left, address his congregation till the clock struck twelve."<sup>71</sup>

Tythingmen were appointed to see that the congregation remained alert and well behaved during the long service, but occasionally there were those who found it difficult to conform to the rigid standards of deportment.

Moses Chandler complained to "The Worshipful Thomas Williams," Justice of the Peace, against Remembrance Grandy, who "did . . . in y<sup>e</sup> time of Public Worship Witingly, Willingly, Voluntarily, and Wickedly sport and play to y<sup>e</sup> great Disturbance of his Majestys good subjects. . ."<sup>72</sup>

Once a terrible riot occurred in the meeting house. Aaron Scott complained, and with apparent just cause, that his daughter, Elizabeth had been assaulted at meeting by one Edward Joiner, who,

. . . with Force & Arms an assault did make on the Body of Betty Scott Daughter of your Complainant, and in a most outrageous Manner did lay Hands on her the said Betty and without Right did violently push and kick her the said Betty from her Seat of which She was then possess<sup>d</sup>—and the apparel of the said Betty which she then and there had on, the said Edward

did with Force and Arms aforesaid tare and greatly damage and abuse and your Complainant further informs that the said Edward did then and there utter one profane Curse by then & there saying Damm you, meaning her the said Betty, if you . . . come into the Pew again, I'll kick you to Hell and many other outrages . . . a high profanation of the Sabbath. . . .<sup>73</sup>

Parson Ashley's sphere of discipline and instruction was not limited to the confines of his pulpit. Ten years after he came to Deerfield the church members had met to consider "whither a minister has not a right to send for Such person as he wants to Confer with about any matter relating to y<sup>e</sup> Chh [church]. . . ."<sup>74</sup> The vote was passed in the affirmative, and Parson Ashley invoked this ruling whenever he felt that the Lord's will was neglected or deliberately abused. The case of Oliver Hastings, "who had been Sent for by the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr Ashley three times & he refusing to Come," was referred to the entire church body.<sup>75</sup>

If the minister felt that the youth of Deerfield were not keeping to the straight and narrow path,

He would send for the young men to his study and admonish them for their roguish tricks . . . He sent for two boys on one occasion and told them to bring their cards; and, after severely reprimanding them, ordered them to burn their cards, and to throw them into the fire in his presence.<sup>76</sup>

Nor did the town's youth alone benefit from lessons taught in the Parson's study. Most of the wealthier families in Deerfield were slave owners in the eighteenth century. Jonathan Wells had Pompey; Thomas Wells had Adam and Peter. Samuel Dickinson owned a black man named Fortune, and Jonathan Hoit and Widow Mary Wells both had a "Casar." The Ashleys owned three slaves, Jinny, who claimed she was an African princess, her son, Cato, who was baptized by his owner in 1741, and Titus.<sup>77</sup>

The minister met with the slaves in his study in the evening and would teach them about God. He told them, "There are none of the human race too low & despicable for God to bestow Salvation upon."<sup>78</sup>

By 1767, the Reverend Jonathan Ashley had lived in Deerfield thirty-five years and was himself fifty-five. The meeting house, now nearly forty years old, was badly in need of repair. In this year, the town voted to pull down the old steeple which stood on top of the roof and to erect a new one to be built from the ground up at the north end of the

June 23. 1762. The chl. being met. a case respecting  
the wife of Joseph Mitchell was laid before the chl.  
She being accused of several unbecoming impressions  
relating to her husband particularly calling of him  
a dog & saying he showed a Duncish spirit did. She  
justifying those impressions before the chl  
kept her <sup>1</sup> ~~1~~ <sup>2</sup> ~~2~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~3~~ <sup>4</sup> ~~4~~ <sup>5</sup> ~~5~~ <sup>6</sup> ~~6~~ <sup>7</sup> ~~7~~ <sup>8</sup> ~~8~~ <sup>9</sup> ~~9~~ <sup>10</sup> ~~10~~ <sup>11</sup> ~~11~~ <sup>12</sup> ~~12~~ <sup>13</sup> ~~13~~ <sup>14</sup> ~~14~~ <sup>15</sup> ~~15~~ <sup>16</sup> ~~16~~ <sup>17</sup> ~~17~~ <sup>18</sup> ~~18~~ <sup>19</sup> ~~19~~ <sup>20</sup> ~~20~~ <sup>21</sup> ~~21~~ <sup>22</sup> ~~22~~ <sup>23</sup> ~~23~~ <sup>24</sup> ~~24~~ <sup>25</sup> ~~25~~ <sup>26</sup> ~~26~~ <sup>27</sup> ~~27~~ <sup>28</sup> ~~28~~ <sup>29</sup> ~~29~~ <sup>30</sup> ~~30~~ <sup>31</sup> ~~31~~ <sup>32</sup> ~~32~~ <sup>33</sup> ~~33~~ <sup>34</sup> ~~34~~ <sup>35</sup> ~~35~~ <sup>36</sup> ~~36~~ <sup>37</sup> ~~37~~ <sup>38</sup> ~~38~~ <sup>39</sup> ~~39~~ <sup>40</sup> ~~40~~ <sup>41</sup> ~~41~~ <sup>42</sup> ~~42~~ <sup>43</sup> ~~43~~ <sup>44</sup> ~~44~~ <sup>45</sup> ~~45~~ <sup>46</sup> ~~46~~ <sup>47</sup> ~~47~~ <sup>48</sup> ~~48~~ 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with theological doctrines, turned more and more after 1768 to politics, then by 1774 to mob violence, and finally to treachery and civil war.

By 1774, many Deerfield men, outraged by the Crown's high-handed and unwarranted demands on her Colonies, had embraced the cause of liberty, some zealously, others on carefully considered intellectual grounds. A vote to support independence was taken and passed in Deerfield on June 25, 1776.<sup>82</sup> Others, among them Parson Ashley, opposed the Revolution not as selfish reactionaries but on principle, sincerely regarding as traitors those to whom success has permitted the title "patriot."

As he adjusted his wig, reached for his large black hat, surtout and cane, and strode down the street, hostile eyes peered out at him and hostile voices muttered hostile words. Travellers of similar Tory persuasion from all over the western frontier would stop to lodge at his home and would discuss the alarming situation, incredulous and helpless as the year 1775 approached. Other friends of many years standing, once recipients of Ashley hospitality, now passed by his gates.

However, in the early days of conflict, Parson Ashley still commanded sufficient support in Deerfield to render out-and-out dismissal from his church impossible. But Whigs, who gathered at Selah Barnard's or David Sexton's taverns to discuss the affairs of the Provincial Congress or the militia company, fortified themselves with brandy toddy or flip and plotted ways to make his life uncomfortable. In 1774, they refused to provide his firewood, long ago promised in his settlement contract. The Parson had estimated that from December 13 to February 8, he burned eighty-seven loads of wood.<sup>83</sup> In 1775, his son, Elihu, was in Worthington, Massachusetts, and a letter to him describes the situation in Deerfield.

If you know how affairs go on at Deerfield, all that I can tell you is, that Whig and Tory about equally divide the Town, they had a meeting there this week, voted not to give your Father any Sallary for this years preaching. . . .<sup>84</sup>

By 1774 it was not uncommon for angry mobs to collect and drive Loyalists from their homes or force them to sign pledges of allegiance and non-aggression. One of these unfortunate Tories, David Ingersol, found sanctuary for a night at the Ashleys' house when forced to flee from Great Barrington.<sup>85</sup>

Colonel Israel Williams, once popular hero of the French and Indian Wars, was mobbed when incriminating letters he had written to Governor Gage were intercepted on the person of Nathaniel Dickinson of Deerfield. Colonel Williams became one of the most thoroughly feared and hated of all Tories in this region. One Captain Cady called him an "old Dog" and wished he would leave the country or be confined in gaol for, "he is Subtle as y<sup>e</sup> Devil and can lay schemes as deep as Hell."<sup>86</sup> The fact that Israel was brother-in-law to Parson Ashley, no doubt increased the Deerfield minister's unpopularity.

Although there was threatening talk from time to time, only once did a mob actually converge on a Deerfield home. On the night of September 1, 1774, a mob tried to storm the house of Phineas Munn.<sup>87</sup> The Ashley home was dark that night and Ashley men stood by with loaded muskets and pistols, fearing that the mob would turn on them. But when the hiding place of Phineas could not be discovered, the mob dispersed. Inexplicably, the day after this lawless outbreak, Deerfield as a town voted to suppress mobs and riots.<sup>88</sup>

During these first years of the Revolution, the role of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley was distinctly not of a passive nature. He refused to become involved to the extent of joining a Loyalist association which Brigadier-General Timothy Ruggles of Hardwick, Massachusetts, promoted, but he fought the rebels with words and vainly tried to convince them that anarchy was a sin and that the results would be nothing less than catastrophic.

November 3, 1774, was set aside for fasting and prayer by the Provincial Congress, but Parson Ashley absented himself from meeting, while two neighboring ministers took charge.<sup>89</sup> A similar episode occurred on December 11 of the same year. Parson Ashley's son recorded, "being Sunday I went to meeting all Day, my Father would not read the Proclamation for a Thanksgiving Issued by the Provincial Congress But upon Desire of some of the People my Brother read it."<sup>90</sup>

Whether the aspect of her husband's persecution by the people he had so devotedly served was intolerable to her, or whether her health was naturally declining, Mistress Dorothy Ashley experienced a mental collapse at the beginning of the War, which forced her into almost complete retirement. On January 17, 1775, Betsey Ashley wrote her brother, Elihu, "Mistress is much beter than Yousal for the minte."<sup>91</sup> But Elihu mentioned his mother only once in a diary which he kept

daily for two years, 1773 to 1775, and then concerning the important matter of his impending marriage. He wrote, "had some talk with my Mamma about the Matter."<sup>92</sup> In 1775, his mother was unable to attend his wedding.

Concern for his mother's health was stressed later by her oldest son, Jonathan, in a petition seeking release from prison where he was held for Tory activities in 1781. He wrote that her "mind for many years past hath been in Such a Situation as produces . . . the most Alarming Apprehension lest this Additional Trouble hurry her to acts too shocking to express."<sup>93</sup>

Quite naturally, legend flourishes regarding this controversial period of the Parson's life. Perhaps entirely spurious, but more likely quite genuine in origin, some stories were recorded in the early nineteenth century when personal recollections supplied information.

It is said that at the beginning of the War Ashley was a guest preacher at Greenfield. When he came to enter the meeting house for the afternoon service, a Whig, Samuel Hinsdale, gave him,

. . . a jog or jostle with his elbow, not exactly gentle and courteous, not precisely rude, like a violent push or shove, . . . On its being repeated the second or third time, Mr. A interrogated him as to his reasons . . . saying, "You should not rebuke an elder," &c, Hinsdale replied, "an elder, an elder, if you had not said you was an elder, I should have thought you was a poison sumach."<sup>94</sup>

After preaching in Deerfield that those Americans who had fallen at Lexington would meet a fearful doom in the next world, another story tells that Jonathan Ashley's pulpit was found nailed up the following week.<sup>95</sup>

When ordered to read a proclamation by the Provincial Congress which was to end with, "God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," Parson Ashley is reported to have read the proclamation faithfully and then drawn himself up to his full height and added, "And God save the King, too, I say, or we are an undone people."<sup>96</sup>

Whether these tales are fact or fiction, they assuredly are credible in that they are entirely characteristic of all well documented knowledge about the Reverend Jonathan Ashley.

In June of 1780, Parson Ashley suffered one final humiliation. In this early summer month a council was called to discuss and weigh the

possibility of his dismissal as ecclesiastical head of the church at Deerfield. The exact proceedings of the council are not known, since the minutes have disappeared. One fragment which has survived is an apology from an anonymous slanderer, who had spread a story ten years previously about certain abusive treatment that Ashley had reputedly effected on his slave, Cato.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the council was probably called as the result of long years of antagonism rather than being precipitated by any one incident. After convening for ten days, the session was disbanded without arriving at a decision.

Had Jonathan Ashley lived, it is likely that Whig forces in Deerfield would have eventually attempted again to secure his dismissal, for as the War dragged on, tension mounted. With each defeat and each winter of privation, the morale of the Colonial army sank lower, and Loyalists began to take heart. The Deerfield Committee of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety became increasingly wary of Tory activity, and the Reverend Jonathan Ashley became increasingly more of a villain. But three months after the council in Deerfield and one year before the surrender at Yorktown, on August 28, 1780, the alleged villain died, a disillusioned man. The exact and immediate causes of his death have not been recorded. Mr. John Taylor wrote that he departed this life, "after a long and distressing illness...."<sup>98</sup>

When Jonathan Ashley went to meet his maker in 1780, he was sixty-nine years old and had ministered honestly to the people of the valley he truly loved for forty-eight years. No one could have foretold in 1732, when young Jonathan first rode into Deerfield, that the order of things was to change and bring to him challenges, frustrations and tragedy. No one could have foreseen the coming economic inflations which rendered his salary a constant source of worry, or the religious revivals which ultimately weakened his authority. Least of all, no one could have predicted in 1732, that in less than half a century the whole ordered system of Colonial government would be threatened and eventually disintegrate, but it is likely that even had Jonathan known what lay ahead, he would have conducted his life no differently.



CHAPTER 3

The Parson's Sons



T H E S Q U I R E , A M I G H T H A V E B E E N

# Jonathan Ashley, Junior

1739-1787

“. . . it is not true always that persons are wrong because y<sup>e</sup> multitude are against them. . . .,” wrote Jonathan Ashley, Esquire to his younger brother, Elihu, in 1769.<sup>1</sup>

Eighteen years later these words could have well served as an epitaph for Parson Ashley’s oldest son, Jonathan Ashley, Junior, whose uncompromising loyalty to the King of England cost him first his physical health, his mental energies and his home, and ultimately his life.

The first thirty-four years of his life, however, were uncomplicated and held promise of security and accomplishment. Graduating from Yale in 1758 at twenty, he studied for the law, and became in 1770 a justice of the peace.<sup>2</sup>

Generous and thoughtful as well as capable, he wrote in another letter to Elihu,

I wish if you think I can at any time serve you that you would consult and advise with me. I should readily hear you and advise I hope as a Brother ought, moved by mere Brotherly Love . . . I send by Mr. Mitchell two Dollars being all I can possibly spare.<sup>3</sup>

In 1771, he bought a homestead in Deerfield across the street from his father’s house<sup>4</sup> and in that year, also, he married Tirza, daughter of Colonel David Field.

But in 1772, the pendulum began to swing toward misfortune; and it never fully swung back. His first son, William, died in infancy. Subsequently Tirza bore him five daughters, the arrival of one of whom was recorded by his brother on November 19, 1774.

after Breakfast went up to my Brothers But was soon drove off from there, my Sister being nigh her time of Delivery, I went over to my Dadas . . . and about Two Tirza I heard was bro’t to Bed of a Girl, and about four I went over there had a fine frolic with y<sup>e</sup> Old Women. . . .<sup>5</sup>

There were no more sons.

In 1774, Jonathan witnessed a mob of 1,500 attack the County Court at Springfield and returned home shocked and disillusioned by this open defiance of sovereign authority.<sup>6</sup> Elihu wrote of his brother, "I never see a person so altered in my life."<sup>7</sup> The following night Jonathan's house was threatened by a mob.

Although his father-in-law, David Field, was a leading Whig, Jonathan Ashley, Esquire never ceased to strive and hope for the return of British law and order. When a Tory majority in Deerfield elected him town clerk and treasurer in 1781, fearful Whigs carried the news to Boston, whereupon an act was passed forbidding persons to vote or hold town office who had not taken the Oath of Allegiance.<sup>8</sup>

Jonathan, along with Seth Catlin and John Williams of Deerfield, was taken to the Suffolk County Jail as a result of this election. On March 23, 1781, he wrote the following petition for release.

... The said Jona. Ashley hath a wife and four daughters, the oldest of which is but seven years of age, who are in constant need of his Personal Attention for their Support and Sustenance, & at present totally unfurnished & without any male help, excepting a Servant boy about 13 years old— . . . Besides he has been for years, Subject to Disorders which frequently and Allarmingly attack him & a Return of which he is in daily apprehension of from want of exercise and free air most essential to his health—being frequently and generally attacked with y<sup>e</sup> Cholic.<sup>9</sup>

The release was eventually granted, although with certain stipulations,<sup>10</sup> but Jonathan never recovered his health.

The year after his release he bought a farm in Shelburne, Massachusetts,<sup>11</sup> where he died on May 30, 1787, aged forty-eight. On the day following his death, his brother, Elihu, purchased two yards of black gauze and a black mourning handkerchief.<sup>12</sup>

Cut from the same stern, conscientious, high-moralled cloth as his father, he was also endowed with a fine intellect and a strong sense of responsibility to his family and to his community. Again like his father, he could not judge the Revolution in terms other than those of a terrible civil war promoted by traitors to the Crown and enemies of God.

The tragedy of Jonathan Ashley, Esquire, who under different circumstances might have inherited the Ashley homestead, lies in the futility of his life, the wasted potential, the ephemeral nature of an existence which left behind so little record of his forty-eight years and so much to suggest what might have been.

## THE ARTISAN, A PARENTHESIS

# Solomon Ashley

1754-1823

“Born in 1754,” “lived temporarily in Hinsdale, New Hampshire,” “never married,” “a potter and gravestone cutter,” “drowned January 14, 1823.” These are the rather meager and pathetic facts recorded about Solomon Ashley, youngest son of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley of Deerfield.<sup>1</sup>

No obituary was printed in the local newspapers at the time of his death; no account books or even examples of his handwriting remain; and, ironically, no gravestone can be found to indicate that his body was ever removed from the Connecticut River where he met his end.

Yet here was a man who lived sixty-nine years, partly in Deerfield, who outlived his two brothers, Jonathan and Elihu, and who, because of the nature of his trade as pottery maker and gravestone carver, must have left a more tangible, material and durable record of his existence in this world than other members of the Ashley family.

Conspicuous by omission, provocative by implication and understatement, the memory of Solomon Ashley has gradually become obscured and almost obliterated.

A search of probate records, where expenditures for gravestones were often recorded in the settlement of an estate, immediately indicated that Solomon Ashley was probably a stone carver of considerable skill.<sup>2</sup> Monuments of his carving were purchased to mark the graves of leading citizens of Hatfield, Hadley and Montague, as well as his native Deerfield.

Visual examination of stones authenticated in these records confirms this conclusion, for although most of Solomon’s earliest stones were executed in slate using a fairly standard pattern of an angel head surrounded by feathered wings, even some of the slate markers show remarkable originality and his later stones are extraordinary representations of mortal countenances carved in white marble.

The explanation of why the youngest son of the Reverend Jonathan

Ashley chose this particular trade is a matter of conjecture, and equally uncertain is the date when he began this work. In 1783 he was living in Hinsdale, New Hampshire, and was called a "Trader."<sup>3</sup> Although it is quite probable that while at Hinsdale Solomon trained with the master carver, Ebenezer Soule, no work by Solomon has been positively identified in New Hampshire.

Three stones in the Deerfield burying ground testify that Solomon must have returned to his home about 1787 or 1788. The faces of these stones, which mark the graves of children of Solomon's brothers and sister, show the dead children lying in their coffins. One other in Deerfield, which shows a mother and child lying side-by-side in a coffin, and three in Greenfield are the only other known examples of this unique design. The fact that three of the known seven are for members of Solomon's immediate family certainly leaves little doubt that Solomon was the carver.<sup>4</sup> The majority of Solomon's slate stones, however, follow a traditional pattern of an angel head with curled hair, feathered wings and a foliated border, but these are so identical to the work of another Deerfield carver and another possible apprentice to the Soule family, John Locke, that most of the early work of these two men cannot be distinguished, a fact which certainly suggests a partnership or common workshop.<sup>5</sup>

Not until 1787, when Solomon was thirty-three, does a bill from Elijah Phelps of Lanesborough, Massachusetts, actually identify him as a "Stone Cutter."<sup>6</sup> Near the close of the Revolution Elijah Phelps, a stone cutter of Northampton, had moved to Lanesborough where he began to work with an older carver, Caleb Smith, and soon established there the first known marble quarry in the state.<sup>7</sup> Until this time grave-stones in western New England were predominately made of slate or red sandstone. Unquestionably by 1787 Solomon had begun to work with white marble which he purchased from the Lanesborough quarries.

When Solomon changed his medium he also changed his style. Many stones known to be the work of Elijah Phelps at Lanesborough are portrait designs similar in conception but not identical to those which Solomon now began to carve. The similarity is far more than coincidental and shows that while Solomon did not copy the Lanesborough carvers, he was strongly influenced by them.

Three adjacent and nearly identical marble stones for the Dickinson

family in the Hatfield, Massachusetts, burying ground show that Solomon and John Locke were still working closely together in the early 1790's. All three stones bear life-like facial portraits above the inscription. For two of these Locke was paid in 1792, while Solomon was commissioned to carve the third in 1794.<sup>8</sup> Only common workmanship could account for the identity of appearance and a continuance of the partnership is clearly suggested.

Shortly, however, Solomon's style began to differ from that of Locke. Although continuing to use marble Locke reverted to the earlier design which he had used on slate, preferring the traditional angel head with wings,<sup>9</sup> while Solomon arrived at a distinctive pattern which he then used almost without change for the next ten years. His fully developed style is quite unmistakable, for while other portrait carvers, such as Elijah Phelps, attempted to achieve a realistic facial representation with a sculptured, three-dimensional relief, Solomon's work is characterized by a flat, incised quality and a stylized rather than realistic countenance. Not individual likenesses, however, these stones of his mature period appear as stereotyped images of mourning figures in an attitude contemplating death. Unlike some of his contemporaries Solomon did distinguish clearly between his male and female figures. Although his patterns are stereotyped, the stones themselves are of various shapes, probably not so much governed by their price as by the taste of his clients.<sup>10</sup>

Harriette M. Forbes referred to the Deerfield burying ground in an article entitled, "Early New England Gravestones And the Men Who Made Them."<sup>11</sup> She wrote, "It would be interesting to know who did your very cubist stones in white marble; certainly a man a hundred or more years ahead of his time. Esther Williams, 1800, is a very simple and very fine specimen of his work."

The identification of this stone carver as Solomon Ashley is revealed by Elihu Ashley, who, in settling the estate of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Esther Williams, wrote,

1800, Nov. 9th pd Ashley for Grave Stones in pt 28/

Dec. 4th pd for Grave Stones in full 39/9<sup>12</sup>

This stone for Esther Williams in 1800 is the last that can be positively identified as Solomon's work, although several others can be stylistically attributed to him after that year. One, that of Mrs. Ann



6. GRAVESTONES OF MRS. ESTHER AND DOCTOR THOMAS WILLIAMS. Typical of the work of Solomon Ashley is the stone of Mrs. Esther Williams, 1800. That of Doctor Thomas Williams was probably carved after 1775 by John Locke.

Ruggles of Montague, Massachusetts, is known to have been carved by Solomon about 1810, but it has unfortunately disappeared.<sup>13</sup>

All available information points to the fact that after 1800 Solomon gave up the trade of stone cutting as his solitary means of support, but it is no wonder that during his brief meteoric career leading families in many towns sought his unique workmanship.

Solomon was living in Deerfield in 1800 and is said to have been working then as a potter, but no records confirm this hypothesis and no examples of his pottery are known.<sup>14</sup> In 1819 Solomon Ashley was sixty-five and no longer supporting himself. An existing document dated 1819, four years before his death, called him, "a person incapable of providing for himself."<sup>15</sup>

Thus, born in 1754 into a world of order and promise, a young man whose place in the town's aristocracy was presumably assured, who became at the overthrow of that order an artisan of undeniable talent and who finally and inexplicably died by drowning in the Connecticut River, Solomon's life unfolds a simple tragedy.

Although there is no written record to confirm the possibility that he ever resided in the family home beyond his childhood days, a curious and coincidental discovery testifies that Solomon can be identified with the old house. It was still customary in the 1790's to mark graves with a footstone as well as with a headstone. Footstones carved by Solomon Ashley are without exception characterized by some sort of geometric figure, a fan, a rosette or compass design. One motif which appears frequently is a six-point star within a circle. In the north downstairs room of the Ashley House can still be seen this design, carefully incised in the panelling. Although the six-point star was a commonly used decorative device, in this instance it seems to be an unintentional message which accidentally betrays Solomon Ashley's presence in the house as surely as his written signature.

## THE DOCTOR

# Elihu Ashley

1750-1817

ELIHU ASHLEY must have been a trial and an enigma to his father, Parson Ashley. Perhaps as a reaction to the sobriety of his surroundings, perhaps as a throwback to some forgotten antecedent, or perhaps as the result of a childhood in which he was indulged with material advantages that were unavailable to his older brother and sisters, Elihu possessed none of the self-discipline, determination, or Calvinistic convictions of his father. Impetuous, fun-loving, spoiled and rather unstable, as a youth his principles though not loose were certainly lax.

Born on July 11, 1750,<sup>1</sup> he spent the first twenty-five years of his life largely in cavorting with other young men of Deerfield's aristocracy, pitching quoits, drinking punch, diverting himself by visiting relatives in Hatfield, and escorting eligible young ladies to impromptu dances. Although not so admirable in some respects, Elihu is actually a much more likable and understandable person than either his older brother, Jonathan, or his father.

Although he never graduated from a college, his education was not neglected. In 1768, at eighteen, he received a certificate from Hatfield Academy, remnant of the Queens College dream.<sup>2</sup> For this higher education he probably prepared at the fashionable school of Master Nathan Tisdale in Lebanon, Connecticut.<sup>3</sup>

In 1768 Elihu was living in Wethersfield, Connecticut, engaged in learning mercantile affairs. That he was a source of concern to his family is apparent in a letter from his older brother, Jonathan, filled with affectionate and brotherly advice. He was warned to honor his father with, "sincere filial Love," to "avoid a Correspondence with the [opposite] Sex unless it be with those of [his] Kindred," and that, "The Man that keeps a Coole head is more likely by far to find the Truth." Above all, Jonathan urged, "I have this further to Ask of you that you would think what calling in life to persue and not live undetermined."<sup>4</sup>

At twenty young Jonathan Ashley, the Parson, had received a call to

settle in Deerfield. At twenty his son, Elihu, was still at loose ends. In 1772 Elihu was twenty-two. This year he taught school in Deerfield and rejected an offer from his sister's husband to enter into the law.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, when he was twenty-three, Elihu Ashley determined to become a doctor. In March of 1773 he went to live and study with Doctor Thomas Williams, whose house stood four lots south of the Ashleys' on the Deerfield street; his lodgings were in the Doctor's garret.

Whether the study of "Physick" was the prevailing attraction or whether a sudden partiality to the Doctor's daughter, Polly, motivated his choice is a matter of speculation. Nevertheless, at this time Elihu had apparently resolved that his adult life was to begin in earnest, for he began to keep a journal, which today offers a valuable insight into medical history, a superb record of early Revolutionary days in Deerfield, and an intimate account of his often tender, frequently quarrel-

Deerfield, Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 1773

Dear Polly

I have no reason to think from what I wrote last Octo<sup>r</sup>  
and some other Letters you have received from me that you  
are insensible of my esteem for thee, I would now desire  
you since you are going away, that if you should occur  
to alter your Mind and make choice of some other Person  
that you would not expose my Letters to any ~~one~~

Oh! may your present Detrmination never alter but may I ins  
pire you with the happiness of being esteemed by you, as I have reason  
to think I have done if your Projections are carried from him who

willingly subscribes himself  
Your Immortal Friend and  
much Obliged Hum<sup>r</sup> Servt

Elihu Ashley

ESRBD

7. ELIHU ASHLEY LETTER TO POLLY WILLIAMS, 1773.

some and always etiquette-bound courtship of Miss Mary Cook Williams, known as Polly.<sup>6</sup>

From March 1773 to December 1774, during his apprenticeship with Doctor Williams, reading *Van Swichten's Commentaries on Boerhaave's Aphorisms*, mixing Jalap or Ethiope's Minerale and attending to minor injuries consumed but a part of Elihu's day. He also helped his father at haying or other farm duties and ran errands for the Doctor.

But there was still plenty of time left for recreation of all sorts. The forenoon was often broken by a visit to John Russell, the tailor, to be fitted for a new pair of breeches, or a sojourn to Hoit's tavern to drink an egg pop while awaiting the post rider, one Silent Wilde, who brought the newspapers from Boston and Worcester. The afternoon's studies were frequently cut short by fishing for pickerel or swimming in the river, a walk to Greenfield, or a drive in the carriage to Hatfield.

Elihu was apparently aware of the charms of Miss Polly Williams somewhat before he became a student of her father, as is indicated in the following invitation to her, dated Deerfield, August 25, 1772.

Dear Polly

As I propose to ride out this Afternoon in Comp<sup>o</sup> wth Mr Field and Miss Heph<sup>h</sup> as far as Muddy Brook and being fond of your Company, I now present my Compl<sup>nts</sup> to thee, and let you know that I would give myself y<sup>e</sup> Pleasure of waiting upon thee, if it should be agreeable to thee, which I shall expect to know by an answer

*from Yours  
Affectionately  
ELIHU ASHLEY*

PS As we purpose to set out half past four, and if you should condescend to go you would oblige me very much in being ready at y<sup>e</sup> Time Appointed.<sup>7</sup>

Although increasingly enamoured of Miss Polly during the years 1773-1774, Elihu did not resign himself immediately from all other female company. Among others, he corresponded with his cousin, Betsey Buckminster of Rutland, but he commented that she "Wants a little polishing."<sup>8</sup> By far the greatest threat to Polly's becoming the future Mistress Ashley was her own sister, Cynthia, who was "very Elert and full of new fun."<sup>9</sup> Once while Polly was visiting her relatives the Dwights in Great Barrington, Elihu wrote in his diary, "Cynthia and I set up in y<sup>e</sup> Kitchen till Eleven and then went up into her Chamber—

and so forth and about one I went to Bed in y<sup>e</sup> Garret so much for one day.”<sup>10</sup>

One particular evening Polly herself filled Elihu’s mind with certain apprehensions concerning the desirability of married life. She and Cynthia sat chatting in the kitchen about their older sister, Elizabeth, who had married Doctor Lemuel Barnard. Elihu wrote that the “Ladies” spoke of, “Ye management of Dr. L Barnard to his wife and how very shiftless she was and how y<sup>r</sup> [they] liv,d wh [ich] was very shocking, fm wh may I be Del, [ivere] d”<sup>11</sup>

Even after Elihu had obtained consent from Doctor Williams to enter into formal courtship with Polly, or Poy as he called her, he did not intend to give up his evenings at Seth Catlin’s tavern, drinking punch, playing Lieu<sup>12</sup> with his friends and discussing politics. Night after night he would return to Doctor Williams’ home somewhere around ten, where he would expect to find, and usually did find, faithful Polly waiting up for him in the back kitchen.

In his diary he recorded such evenings. The conversation frequently began with recriminations on her part—he didn’t really love her; he had found someone else; they had better give up the courtship. But Polly always relented and the rest of the time was spent in talking about their future, the uncertain times, and in re-affirming their affections. One such evening Elihu wrote,

Came home about nine, found Poy in the Shop, who appeared to have been very much worried with the meeting up the preceeding Evening. I observed to her that she had better marry me and then there would be no need of our sparkling.<sup>13</sup>

Another night Elihu tormented her with doubts as to her intentions.

We had not been together long before we entered upon courtship and as the fondest lovers are the most jealous, I asked her whether she was affronted with me . . . I then went on and told her I wondered how she came to encourage my addresses, since there were so many others more worthy of her. She answered and said the offer of all the men in the world would not make her repent her choice . . . about three we parted.<sup>14</sup>

It probably never occurred to Elihu to ally himself with other than the Loyalists in the controversial years before the Revolution. In his secret heart, however, he might have admitted that his belief was not

so much determined by moral issues as by an indignation that those he considered beneath him, in breeding and education, would dare to challenge his King, his father, his relatives and his friends.

Throughout New England towns by 1774, enthusiastic Whigs had seized on the idea of setting up so-called Liberty Poles as a visible sign of their patriotic proclivities. On the night of July 28, 1774, one such pole was brought into Deerfield by some temporary residents, and laid down to await daylight before it could be raised. Elihu recorded his adventures on this night in his diary.

Dick came and told me there was a Liberty Pole brought into Town by Potter and Ned Lawrence. He desired I would go and cut it off, I told him I would if he let me have a saw. He went home and got one which I took and went and sawed it about half off, . . . About twelve Catlin and Munn and myself went and sawed the Pole off in the Middle. The said Pole was about fifty feet.<sup>15</sup>

Elihu's reward for this Tory heroism was betrayal by his friend, Dick or David Dickinson, instigator of the affair. The next day another pole was successfully set up in front of David Field's store.

Discreetly withholding his own identity as the culprit, Elihu elaborated his description of the escapade in a letter dated the "last day of July," 1774. His narrative is intermittently humorous, sarcastic and contemptuous.

Nevertheless Permit me to tell you of the Proceedings of some young Gentlemen of this Town in the Week Past; Ephraim Potter and Edward Lawrence taking into their serious consideration the Present Alarming Situation of N America occasioned by the hand of Power, and upon mature deliberation thought the Erecting a Liberty Pole would have the most happy Tendency of restoring and Establishing Peace and Harmony between the Mother Country and the Colonies, Therefore did on the 28th of this Instant get one into Town, but it being late, they were not able to credit it and on the same Night by some Malicious Person Inimical to his Country the said Pole was Sawn in sunder. Nevertheless on the Ensuing Night the Liberty Pole was set up and also a Torey Pole . . . Thus We have the Honor by it that it was set up by a Pack of Ignorant Villains, Where my Girl are things going, that so sensible a People as you know the Town of Deerfield are, should suffer these Rascals to carry matters on so,—I cannot help feeling and that very sensibly, where I think what the Consequences of these things will be, and have no reason to think but that they will Issue in Blood. . . .<sup>16</sup>

By December 1774 Elihu had satisfactorily completed his studies with Doctor Williams. He could dress injuries, administer cathartics or emetics, prescribe diluting remedies and bleed a patient. He could extract a tooth, with instruments forged for him by the Northampton blacksmith, Quartus Pomeroy, set a broken bone, diagnose a case of chicken pox, worms or camp distemper. He could administer a powder to revive a young woman who, "Showed signs of breeding."<sup>17</sup> He was not, however, qualified in the arts of obstetrics or major operations. These he left to the midwife and the surgeon respectively.

In this year of 1774, when he was twenty-four years old, Elihu Ashley took a drastic step. He determined to leave the relative comforts of Deerfield, to relinquish the society of his family and friends, and to set up a practice in the newly settled town of Worthington, Massachusetts, far off in the hills to the west. When the decision was made there were lengthy candlelight conversations with Polly. She courageously promised that once he was established, "she was willing to go anywhere," and that he "might depend upon it," although, "thots of driving into y<sup>e</sup> woods among Strangers was dreadful."<sup>18</sup> Once he had resolved to go, however, the quoit-pitching, punch-drinking Elihu vanished forever. It was a mature young doctor who set out into the wilderness.

As he departed from Deerfield on December 13, 1774, Elihu wrote that, "The whole of my things amounted to fourteen pounds," and that Poy's "Eyes looked very full."<sup>19</sup>

The next day he arrived at the tavern of Nahum Eager in Worthington about seven in the evening and said, ". . . with much persuasion I got Mrs Eager to Board me for a fortnight, accordingly I put out, unpacked my things. Now got to the place where I am to set up y<sup>e</sup> practice of Physick. Things looking very dark. Publick matters run very high and a doleful time for a young man to set out in any business."<sup>20</sup>

During the next few months Elihu treated pleurisy, colic, falls from horses, dropsy, and a woman suffering from cancer. He learned discretion, for Whig sentiments predominated in Worthington, and he adjusted himself to his new home by helping at barn raisings and by attending singing schools. He managed to visit Deerfield once in a while and hoped to have sufficient means within a year to marry Poy.

One Sunday in Worthington his responsibilities weighed heavily and he wrote,

It rained very hard, I had the Mully Grubs all Day about getting a living, marrying, &c. I began to wish I had never thought of it. At nine I went to bed and slept away my Troubles in some measure.<sup>21</sup>

Spring came to Worthington in 1775, but the plowing and planting were interrupted on April 21, when news was brought of an event which had occurred two days before at Lexington.

About  $\frac{1}{2}$  after one Mr. Avery of Gageborough came in from Northampton. He brought a letter from Col. Pomeroy to Col. Eager, in which were orders for him to muster the company and immediately march to headquarters . . . a brigade consisting of about 1000 marched from Boston up to Lexington in order to apprehend John Hancock and others, where they were faced by a Militia company, upon which they fired, killed six, wounded four, that upon the peoples mustering they had got into a warm engagement and had killed numbers on both sides. Eager set upon mustering the people here. One was sent one way and another another, about sunset he got the company together, determining to have set out this evening, but the men thought different from the officers. Therefore they concluded to tarry and such conduct I never saw in my life, men as drunk as David's sow, cursing and swearing. They acted more as if the Devil had possessed them than anything else . . . And how they expected to get down to Boston the Lord only knows. Gage with all his Troop and all Great Britain were conquered and taken by the strength of the liquor.<sup>22</sup>

One Moses Morse, a rival physician, saw to it that Elihu's lack of sympathy with the Colonist rebellion was well publicized in Worthington, but Elihu, never so vehement as his father or brother, was able to establish his unwillingness and inability to aid either side, and remained, at least outwardly, neutral.

On September 24, 1775, Phineas Munn appeared at Eager's tavern in Worthington. Elihu told him he was "very sorry to see him, supposing he was a Messenger of Bad Tidings." Munn said that he was and that, "Doctor Williams Lay at the Point of Death and that Mrs. Williams desired him to call."<sup>23</sup>

Elihu left immediately for Deerfield. When he arrived he found that the Doctor had a fatal case of pneumonia and that the family were gathering. He recorded his visit to the Doctor's bedside.

Just able to whisper he Told me he had some proposals to make me which were that I should come & take care of his Family and set up y<sup>e</sup>

Practice here & take his Medicines, which he gave me, said I might keep two Cows upon ye Farm as he Expected I should marry Polly, whom he desired I should treat with Kindness.<sup>24</sup>

Although he had just decided to buy land and settle permanently in Worthington, Elihu consulted with his father and agreed to accept the Doctor's offer. At two o'clock in the morning of September 28, Doctor Williams died, "in calmness of Mind Resigned to will of Heaven, . . . with Ease and in his Reason."<sup>25</sup>

Two months later, on November 2, 1775, Miss Polly Williams became Mistress Ashley. Ordinarily the wedding would have been celebrated with three days of dancing, feasting and gaiety by relatives and friends from Hatfield, Great Barrington and Stockbridge. Because of the recent death of Doctor Williams and because Tory families had little reason to rejoice, the ceremony was attended only by the immediate family and one intimate friend, who gathered in the Williams' parlor to toast the bride with tea.

Elihu wrote a simple account of the event.

I went to my Dada's & fixt myself for ye Marriage return,d here again about Seven had my Brothers & Sisters & Lt Catlin here to Drink Tea which being over the Knot was tied by ye Rev<sup>d</sup> Jona Ashley, the Comp<sup>o</sup> tarried till Ten then went away I sat up till Eleven & then to Bed.<sup>26</sup>

Inexplicably three days later, on November 5, 1775, Elihu Ashley made the last entry in his diary.

Elihu and Polly did live in the Williams' home until after 1780 when Parson Ashley died. According to the Parson's will, the Ashley farm was to be divided among the children,<sup>27</sup> but Elihu bought the portions of his brothers and sisters and took Polly to live in the old family home.

That Elihu was able to adjust to the new order of things, where his father and brother could not, is not surprising and entirely consistent with his ability to compromise and to approach the future from a practical point of view. By 1783 all former animosities had apparently been forgotten, for even in this, the very year the War ended, Elihu was elected selectman by the town, an office which he subsequently held four more times.

In 1787 Elihu Ashley was one of fifteen men who organized a new school in Deerfield. It is thought that from this school came the idea



8. HIGH CASE OF DRAWERS. Once owned by Elihu Ashley, this piece is now in the collection of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield.

for Deerfield Academy, whose charter was granted by Governor Samuel Adams in 1797, ten years later.<sup>28</sup>

Four children were born to Elihu and Polly, but the second born, Nancy, died at six months by smothering in her trundle bed. Gradually becoming less and less a doctor and more and more a farmer, Elihu Ashley died in 1817, leaving the home at the north end of the street to his oldest son, Thomas Williams Ashley. Polly lived to be seventy-eight, and when she died in 1831, she was known as "Grandma," for scarcely anyone then remembered the nights in the back kitchen and Elihu's "Poy."



CHAPTER 4

## The Farm



## L O R D N O R T H

# Thomas Williams Ashley

1776-1848

CALLED "Tommy" by his Aunt Cynthia in 1786,<sup>1</sup> when he was ten years old, and "Old Black Tom" in 1912 by George Sheldon,<sup>2</sup> the historian who remembered him, Thomas Williams Ashley was the oldest son of Doctor Elihu Ashley and the only grandson of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley to carry on the family name in Deerfield.

Somewhere between 1776, the year in which he was born, and 1848, when he died, little Tommy Ashley apparently became thoroughly disliked by most of his fellow townspeople. Sheldon also wrote, "people didn't think much of him he was always fighting."<sup>3</sup>

When his father, Elihu, died in 1817, Thomas inherited the home-stead<sup>4</sup> and became the first Ashley in Deerfield to make farming his main occupation in life. He married Lydia Crosbey of Enfield, Massachusetts, in 1814, and by 1835 she had been delivered of seven children.

During the War of 1812, he received a commission as Infantry Captain in the North Company of Deerfield militia<sup>5</sup> and afterwards became a Colonel in the militia Cavalry.<sup>6</sup> In later years people addressed him respectfully as Colonel Ashley, but called him sarcastically "Lord North" behind his back.<sup>7</sup>

Doctor Elihu Ashley had bequeathed \$120 and two suits of clothes to one Ozias Nutting, with the provision that he live with the Ashley family until he was twenty-one.<sup>8</sup> The following testimony, if consistent with the character of Thomas Williams Ashley, may account for some of his unpopularity.

Feby 4th 1822. This day Ozias Nutten told me that Thos Ashley Owed him and would not pay him. he stated that Doctr Ashley Will,d him \$120.00 to be paid . . . when he, Ozias was 21 years of age, together with 2 new Suits of Clothes, Thos had paid him \$ 40.00 & no more, & no Clothes. He then went on, upon his Character & Stated that he Saw him pick up a Pitch fork which fell from a load of Hay . . . & set it over the wall, at dusk, he saw him go & get fork & with his knife Cut the Man,s

Name from the Stake.—He farther Stated, that the said Thos found a Fork that the Flood took from Mr. O Ware and Cut his Name from that, & never Returned either one of these. I will make Oath

CONSIDER DICKINSON<sup>9</sup>

Thomas Williams Ashley operated the farm for thirty-one years, during which period Deerfield gradually relaxed into a peaceful but prosperous farming village. Barges continued to dock at Cheapside, northern terminal for Connecticut River trade, bringing with them English and West Indian goods, flour from Albany, rum from Boston and cotton from the South. When they departed they were loaded with farmers' produce, potash, Deerfield made brooms, cider brandy, cranberries and handles for farm tools.<sup>10</sup> But Deerfield men turned more and more to the land and to raising beef cattle, while Greenfield became the center of commerce.

In 1824 Parson Ashley's old meeting house on the Deerfield Common was pulled down and a new handsome brick church was erected to the north of the former site.<sup>11</sup> Deerfield purchased its first fire engine in 1830,<sup>12</sup> and a town hall was built in 1841.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, for reasons which are not entirely clear, Thomas Ashley did not participate in the general agricultural prosperity. In 1824, he mortgaged a part of his estate,<sup>14</sup> and additional mortgages in 1830,<sup>15</sup> and in 1841,<sup>16</sup> left him seriously in debt. Finally, on April 29, 1843, he sold his entire farm to Isaac Abercrombie of Deerfield,<sup>17</sup> with the right to re-purchase within one year and to lease the farm for that year.<sup>18</sup>

Just five months later, on September 30, 1843, at one o'clock in the afternoon a fire broke out in the barn of Thomas Ashley's neighbor to the north, Mr. Richard Dickinson. Spreading rapidly, it destroyed the house and all of Mr. Dickinson's buildings. Before it was put out, many of the Ashley outbuildings were also consumed. One report said that, "Fears were sometime entertained for the safety of his [Ashley's] house, but by the exertions of the citizens of Deerfield the house was saved."<sup>19</sup> An eyewitness believed that if the wind had not changed, the Sheldon house, next south, would have burned also.<sup>20</sup>

A petition was drawn up on February 29, 1844, to solicit funds for the relief of Thomas Ashley.<sup>21</sup> Only five Deerfield men felt sufficiently charitable toward "Old Black Tom" to contribute to his relief, but



9. DEERFIELD MAIN STREET. Looking north the Sheldon home appears on the left adjacent to the Ashley homelot. The house built in 1869 is discernible behind the trees.

apparently Isaac Abercrombie, now owner of the farm, was moved by the hardships incurred in the fire for on March 9, 1844, "Considering Col. Ashley's Misfortune," he agreed to extend the lease and right to re-purchase for another year.<sup>22</sup> This practice he subsequently continued yearly until 1848, the year of Thomas Ashley's death.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the unpleasant nature ascribed to Thomas Williams Ashley is unjust, and perhaps the existing documents do not tell the full story. It has been stated that his brother, Robert Williams Ashley, a doctor who moved to Lyons, New York, destroyed many valuable family papers before his death.<sup>24</sup> These papers, had they survived, might have exonerated the Deerfield farmer.

Thomas Ashley died on January 6, 1848, from pneumonia brought on by a cold contracted while butchering hogs. His son wrote of him, "Even in his old age he helped take care of the barn and took delight in being busy about something."<sup>25</sup>

U N C L E J O H N

# Jonathan Ashley

1816-1895

**I**N 1848 when Jonathan Ashley and Thomas Williams Ashley, Junior, inherited the property of their father, Colonel Ashley, his entire real estate, amounting to \$25.00, consisted of a pew and a half a pew in the brick church.<sup>1</sup> The Ashley farm had for five years been the property of Isaac Abercrombie. In this same year Zachary Taylor had been elected President of the United States, gold was discovered in California and the railroad had come to Deerfield. Tobacco growing was becoming an important industry in the Connecticut Valley, while western competition was soon to destroy the New England beef market. In this year, also, Henry King Hoit pulled down the Old Indian House, which had been the home of John Sheldon at the time of the massacre of 1704 and the tavern of David Hoit during the Revolution.

The two Ashley brothers were contemporaries of George Fuller, the Deerfield painter, and of George Sheldon, the Deerfield historian. The latter remembered playing with them and said,

... in the garret I played with Jonathan, Crosbey, & Williams & Mary —I called him Will—Will had scarlet fever & couldn't open his jaw much for a while. Jonathan we called John—John redeemed the farm wh[ich] his father had let go to destruction . . . We used to rampage over the house.<sup>2</sup>

If the Ashley farm were not actually near destruction in 1848, a possible termination of the then 155 year period of occupancy by the Ashley family was certainly imminent. Colonel Thomas Ashley had continued to live on the homelot only on the basis of a yearly lease from Isaac Abercrombie, a situation subject to change at any time the new owner should decide not to renew the lease and thereby take possession. Although an agreement in 1843 had given the Ashleys the right to buy back their farm, the mortgages with interest now amounted to over



10. 1869 ASHLEY HOUSE. After this house was moved to the Deerfield Academy campus in 1945, dormers were added to accommodate more students.

\$7,000 and the possibility that the two brothers could secure such a sum seemed slight.

Working against these incredible odds, John and Will managed to borrow money from Ely and Day of Holyoke, which they were to pay back in logs and wood.<sup>3</sup> Within fifteen months after the death of their father, on May 12, 1849, they received a deed to the farm from Abercrombie who wrote, "Deeded the Ashley Estate by a Release deed to the Wid Lydia I. Ashley the Homestead & to Jonathan & Thomas W. Ashley the sons the Residue For \$7452.11."<sup>4</sup> Will, who kept a journal, wrote on this day, "John went to Greenfield, settled with Abercrombie, got a deed of the farm."<sup>5</sup> It was not for twelve years, however, that the final payment was made to Abercrombie on April 5, 1861, and the mortgage discharged.<sup>6</sup>

In 1841, seven years before his father died, John Ashley had made a trip to Illinois to visit Deerfield friends who had begun to settle there. That he, too, was contemplating such a move is apparent in a letter which one settler sent back to Deerfield. The letter said, ". . . we had a fine visit from Johnathan [sic] Ashley he was very much pleased with the country thinks of buying here soon."<sup>7</sup>

John chose to return to Deerfield, but on March 23, 1854, Will sold his share of the farm to John for \$2,000<sup>8</sup> and moved to Iowa, where he and others from Deerfield founded the town of Deerfield, Iowa. He revisited his old home only once, in 1875,<sup>9</sup> and died in Iowa in 1888.

By exercising the same determination and energy which enabled him to reclaim the farm, John carefully added to his land holdings and became not only financially prosperous but also an influential member of the village. Of a retiring nature, it is said that only once could he be persuaded to hold a town office.

On Monday, May 24, 1869, the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* announced,

Jonathan Ashley is building a new and convenient house on his home-stead at the north end of Deerfield street . . . The last few years have witnessed many improvements in the dwellings and outbuildings of the farmers who reside on old Deerfield Street, but there is yet room for improvement. This is one of the shadiest and pleasantest streets in the Connecticut Valley.<sup>10</sup>

When John Ashley built his new house he moved the old house to the rear of his lot to be used as a tobacco warehouse,<sup>11</sup> for although the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield's historical society, was founded in 1870, the very year after the old house was moved back to the rear of the lot, only a few were as yet interested in preserving an old-fashioned structure. The newspaper account, which praised recent improvements on the Deerfield street, echoed the prevailing attitude.

By this year of 1869, the Civil War had been over for four years. A Portland standstone figure of a Union soldier made by James G. Batterson of Hartford now stood on the site of Parson Ashley's meeting house on the Common as a monument to the War dead.<sup>12</sup> Work on the Hoosac Tunnel was underway, and tobacco was selling in Deerfield for 25 to 30 cents a pound. Mr. E. G. Brigham announced in the

newspaper that he had slaughtered a two-year-old heifer that dressed 801 pounds. A Lyceum was organized at the Deerfield Town Hall for lectures and debates. John Ashley had grown sideburns.

Jonathan, or John, Ashley had married Mary Smith of Whately in 1844, and in 1851 a son and only child was born. He was called Elihu after his great-grandfather, Doctor Elihu Ashley. When only eight, Elihu died of scarlet fever in the middle of the winter of 1859.

In 1875, John's brother Will, for whom things had not prospered in Iowa, made his one visit to Deerfield and brought with him, at John's request, his fifteen-year-old son, Charles Hart Ashley. Young Charles was to live in Deerfield with his Uncle John, from whom he eventually inherited the farm.

On September 14, 1895, the newspaper in Greenfield reported, "There will be a concert at Frary House this evening, at 7.45. The programme includes old English songs, songs from Shakespeare and music for violin and piano forte. The admission is thirty cents."<sup>13</sup>

On another page a simple notice read, "Died . . . In Deerfield, Sept. 8, Jonathan Ashley, aged 79."<sup>14</sup>

THE REPRESENTATIVE

# Charles Hart Ashley

1860-1925

WHEN Charles Hart Ashley was brought from Iowa to Deerfield in 1875 to live with his Uncle John, he was fifteen. He began to attend Deerfield Academy in the old brick building that had been built in 1799. When he finished school in 1881 the old academy had been converted into a Memorial Hall to accommodate the growing collection of the newly organized historical society. A new school building had been erected on the old Williams family homelot facing the Deerfield Common with funds made available in the will of Esther Dickinson.

A tall, handsome man, wearing a Van Dyke beard when he grew older, Charles was never a great talker.<sup>1</sup> He worried a lot but seldom burdened others with his problems. Those who knew him well, however, could tell when something was on his mind by the way he bit on his pipe.

In 1889 he married Miss Gertrude Porter and brought her to live in his uncle's house. Four children were born before his Uncle John died in 1895: Jonathan, Natalie, Mildred and Thomas.

Charles worked hard on the farm, and even though he had hired help he, himself, would walk from Deerfield to Wilmington, Vermont, driving his herd of cattle to summer pasture. He raised vegetables for family consumption, but his principal crop was tobacco. He was active in helping to form the Connecticut Valley Tobacco Growers Association.<sup>2</sup>

It was said of Charles Ashley that, "There was seldom a civic improvement activity which did not have his whole-hearted support."<sup>3</sup> For many years he was in charge of music at the annual meeting of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, and he frequently passed the collection plate at the Congregational Church. He was selectman and assessor for the town, and in 1922 he was elected representative to the state legislature.<sup>4</sup>

In 1902 Charles Ashley became acquainted with a young man, who, having just graduated from Amherst College, was brought to Deerfield to be headmaster of Deerfield Academy and Dickinson High School. There were, in 1902, only fourteen students enrolled in the Academy. The young man was Frank L. Boyden, who soon learned that he could depend on Charles for friendship and unquestioning support.

Charles Hart Ashley died on August 11, 1925, in his home. He was sixty-five years old and had spent fifty years on the old Ashley farm in Deerfield.<sup>5</sup> He left his homestead to his son, Jonathan Porter Ashley, as well as his automobile and his "Knight Templar Regalia."<sup>6</sup> His younger son, Thomas Williams Ashley, had been killed at Belleau Wood in 1918.

An inventory of his property taken after his death gives the following values to the buildings on his homelot:

House	\$3000.
Shop and Garage	100
Hay Barn Cattle Shed	1000
Horse Barn Pig Shed	300
Hen House	10
Ice "	25
Old "	50

Appearing at the bottom of the list, Parson Ashley's house was appraised at only twice the value of the ice house and one sixth that of the horse barn and pig shed. The old house, converted into a tobacco shed in 1869, had now stood in the corn field for fifty-six winters storing tobacco leaves grown over fifty-six summers on the Ashley farm.

## THE TEACHER

# Thomas Williams Ashley

1894-1918

WHEN word reached Deerfield in July 1918 that Charles Ashley's younger son, Tom, had been killed at Belleau Wood, the entire town was saddened.<sup>1</sup> Many had known him as a boy who had roamed the woods with his rifle keeping careful count of his game. ". . . 1 blue jay, 3 red squirrels, 6 muskrats, 15 skunks . . . 1 mudturtul. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Competing with other boys in town to see who could swim in the river earliest in the spring, he had set the record in 1906, when he was twelve. He recorded in a small notebook, "March 23, Went swimming first time had to wade through snowdrift to get in the water."<sup>3</sup>

Others had known him as a school boy at Deerfield Academy who approached his lessons with persistence and an inquiring mind and who played fullback on the football team against Hadley, Athol and New Salem. In 1907 the school was too small for a team and Tom, aged thirteen, wrote, "Did not have any team in the fall of 1907 but practiced baseball until it was to [sic] cold."<sup>4</sup> But in 1909 the young headmaster, Frank Boyden, joined the team and played quarterback in four games.

Everyone in Deerfield had been proud of Tom when he went to Amherst College and graduated in 1916 with good grades in his subjects and an outstanding athletic record.

Perhaps no one outside his immediate family felt the loss of Tom Ashley as much as his teacher, teammate and friend, Frank Boyden. When Tom finished at Amherst he had returned to teach at Deerfield Academy in the fall. Together the Headmaster and Tom had realized that the whole process of education extends far from the classroom into all phases of a boy's life; together they had searched for ways to improve and enlarge the country high school.

Tom Ashley spent only one year on the Deerfield Academy faculty; however his presence is very much felt today in an Academy of 500 students, one of the best known boarding schools in the country. Frank Boyden tells his boys every year that it was young Tom Ashley who first



11. DEERFIELD COMMON about 1912. Tom Ashley attended school in the building on the left. The Civil War Monument on the right stands on the site of the 1729 meeting house.

suggested that boarding facilities should be available for those who did not live in Deerfield, and who first planned to convert the old Williams home into a dormitory.

Tom worked on a catalogue for his school which was never finished, but his words of 1917 are haunting to those who know Deerfield today. Speaking of the aims of the school he wrote: "Believing that the well-fare [sic] of the group is best attained thru the development of the individual: the chief aim of the school may be well said to be the development of its individual students."<sup>5</sup> He wanted each boy to be aware of "an underlying almost unconscious principle that the school shall stand for the right things. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Toward the end he wrote, "If the spirit of Deerfield Academy could be condensed into a word that word would be 'loyalty'.<sup>7</sup>

Tom Ashley's hope to create a fine school in Deerfield is especially haunting to those who remember his ancestor, the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, and recall the minister's plan in 1762 to establish Queens College.

## THE HISTORIAN

# Jonathan Porter Ashley

1890-1948

THE older of Charles Hart Ashley's two sons, Jonathan Porter Ashley, was born in 1890. A serious man, he was the first member of the family to take conscious pride in his family history. He wrote a paper called, "An Ashley Genealogy,"<sup>1</sup> which was read at the annual meeting of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in 1924; and another called, "The Old World Pasture,"<sup>2</sup> published in 1940 by the same society which spoke of the natural loveliness of the Ashley land across the river in West Deerfield.<sup>3</sup> In both articles he attempted to gather information about Parson Ashley and also about the generations of the nineteenth century. He was the first member of the family to save and protect old family furniture and papers. Once while exploring the old tobacco barn he discovered a bow front chest of drawers. It was filled with nails and bolts. When he asked his father if he might have it and bring it into the house, his father thought the request quite strange but consented provided that a suitable replacement were found for storing the nails.

Jonathan worried a good deal, but silently as had his father. He often wandered off to the old tobacco barn when he wanted to think. Sometimes while sitting in the old house with his back against a post, he had careless and fanciful thoughts about restoring it, thoughts that seemed to him impossible. He wrote, ". . . Where once perhaps the desk of the Rev. Jonathan Ashley stood, an anvil now reposes. If one is looking for a hammer and some nails, a hoe or a cultivator, he is told to find it 'down to the Old House.' . . . Perhaps some day this old house can be restored."<sup>4</sup>

When financial difficulties which began in the depression became insurmountable by 1945, Jonathan realized that he would have to sell the farm.<sup>5</sup> The land had been Ashley land since 1733 and it was not without sadness that he signed the deed. Because he knew that his own house was to be used for a dormitory for Deerfield Academy, the school

his brother, Tom, had helped to plan and build, and because he knew that the old house of Parson Ashley was to be brought back from the fields and restored, Jonathan was able to reconcile the loss of the Ashley farm. Jonathan Ashley lived only three years after he sold the farm, but before he died on October 29, 1948, he was able to visit the completed restoration of the old house.



C H A P T E R 5

The Houses on Lot 2



# The First House

AT A MEETING held in Dedham, Massachusetts, May 23, 1670, the proprietors of Pawcomptuck, who had been granted 8000 acres in the western part of the Colony in return for lands forfeited for Indian education, agreed, "that an Artiste be pcured [procured] . . . that may laye out the Lotts at Pawcomptucke . . . and returne to the Town a true platt. . . ."<sup>1</sup> Forty-three homelots were subsequently laid out in Deerfield of which the second lot from the north end on the west side of the street was granted to Major Eleazer Lusher, one of Dedham's leading citizens. The lot was designated as "Houselot 2d in Number in y<sup>e</sup> Town Platt."<sup>2</sup>

On this lot was to live the Reverend Jonathan Ashley from 1733 to 1780, in a two storied gambrel roofed house, which ultimately became the tobacco shed in 1869 and finally the museum in 1948. But this house was not the first to occupy the lot.

Lieutenant Thomas Wells, who is said to have come to Deerfield at the time of permanent settlement in 1686,<sup>3</sup> was living on the lot at least by 1688 when he testified that in late July of that year, "there came by water to his house fifteen Indians, who . . . came to these parts to hunt."<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Wells died in 1681 and a posthumous title to his homelot was given to his heirs in 1692 by John Pynchon of Springfield. The deed called the grantee "Thomas Wells late of Deerfield,"<sup>5</sup> and stated that the homelot therein conveyed was lot number two, which had been sold to Pynchon by Major Eleazer Lusher. Any mention of a house on the lot was omitted in the deed.

Sufficient proof that there definitely was a house on the lot when Thomas Wells died may be found, however, in an inventory of his estate taken August 1, 1691. The inventory listed "HomSted [sic] 45-00-00 . . . Homlot 04-00-00 . . ."<sup>6</sup>

After her husband's death in 1691, the Widow Hepzibah Wells lived in the house with her children. In an account of a surprise attack made in 1695 by supposedly "trading Indians" on the homes of Widow Wells and her neighbor to the north, Thomas Broughton, there is indication that by this year the Wells house had two stories. It was recorded that on June 6, 1693,

in ye beginning of midnight yy came upon y<sup>m</sup>—& killd Sgnt Broughton & his wife & children —3— & scalped 3 of ye widow Wells daughters (dan<sup>ll</sup> being asleep in ye chamber not hurt & Nath<sup>ll</sup> Kellogg jumpd out of mrs Wells chamber Window & escaped) 2 dyd of yr wounds & ye 3d livd. . ."<sup>7</sup>

At that time the term "chamber" was used solely to designate rooms above the ground floor.

The Widow Hephzibah was married again in 1699 to Daniel Belding; but five years later she died when, as a prisoner of the French and Indians after an attack made on Deerfield in 1704, she was unable to survive the long winter march to Canada which the captives were forced to make.<sup>8</sup>

Although none of the heirs of Lieutenant Thomas Wells were listed by Fitz-John Winthrop in his detailed report of the loss of life and property in the 1704 massacre,<sup>9</sup> other accounts of the damage indicate that most of the houses at the north end of the town were burned.<sup>10</sup> The fact that Thomas Wells, Junior, also a lieutenant, purchased another homelot with a house upon it further south on the street shortly after 1704 certainly implies that his father's house had been destroyed.<sup>11</sup>

At any rate, if the house did survive the 1704 attack, it was not standing on the lot in 1720. In this year, Thomas Wells, Junior, sold his father's homelot for £50 to his first cousin, another Thomas Wells, who was by occupation a cordwainer.<sup>12</sup> No buildings were named in the deed.

One year later, in 1721, Thomas Wells, the cordwainer, sold homelot number two to Moses Nash, a blacksmith from Hadley, for £70.<sup>13</sup> This was an increase in the value of the lot of £20, but again there were no buildings mentioned in the deed. Thomas Wells, the cordwainer, had recently purchased the Stebbins homelot, lying between Ensign John Sheldon and the Reverend John Williams which abutted on the Deerfield Common.<sup>14</sup>

In 1726 Moses Nash, having moved to Hartford, sold the lot to John Wells of Deerfield, a brother of Thomas Wells, the cordwainer, for £70, his own purchase price. Still no buildings were mentioned in the conveyance.<sup>15</sup>

In 1732 Thomas Wells, Junior, son of the first Thomas and Hephzibah, gave a homelot at Green River, now Greenfield, Massachusetts, to his "loving cousin John Wells."<sup>16</sup> Apparently John Wells removed to

Green River shortly thereafter, for on June 28, 1733, he sold his Deerfield lot, Lot 2, to Jonathan Ashley for £251, "with the Edifices thereon. . . ."<sup>17</sup> This was the first time buildings had been recorded on the lot since 1691.

# Parson Ashley's House

1733-1869

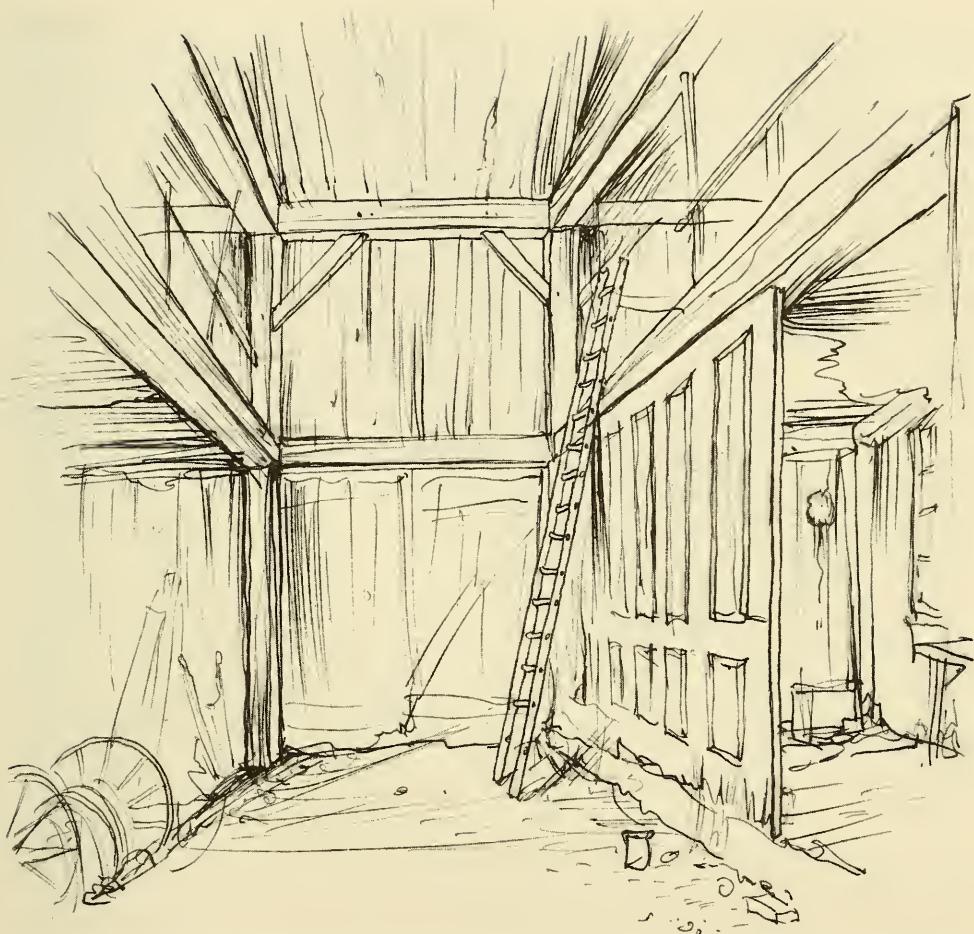
ALTHOUGH the 1733 conveyance from John Wells to Jonathan Ashley is unspecific in regard to the particular sort of edifices that were then standing on the lot, it is relatively safe to say that among these edifices there was a dwelling house and furthermore that this same dwelling house was essentially the house in which the Reverend Jonathan Ashley spent his life in Deerfield and which later, in 1869, became the tobacco warehouse.

The vast increase in the value of the lot between 1726 when John Wells bought it for £70 and 1733 when he sold it for £251 is alone sufficient to suggest that a house and not merely barns or outbuildings had been built during the seven-year ownership of John Wells.

Granting even that John Wells did sell the lot in 1733 with a house on it, it could be argued that this was not necessarily the gambrel roofed house of Jonathan Ashley. In theory the Parson could have, at some time during his life, pulled down the John Wells house, and built a new one. Implications in the minister's account book,<sup>1</sup> however, supplemented by his accounts with various Deerfield merchants,<sup>2</sup> deny this possibility.

In Jonathan Ashley's accountings there is no large and consecutive accumulation of debts to carpenters, housewrights or joiners to show that he ever paid for the construction of an entire house. Absent from his records are any significant large purchases of glass, nails, lumber or masonry work, which appear altogether at any one sustained period, to imply that he was responsible for having a house built. His only account of raising or framing specifically refers to a corn house in 1759.<sup>3</sup>

Since Parson Ashley apparently did not build a house and since the first time a house was built by any of his descendants was in 1869 when the old house was moved and converted into a tobacco barn, the house in which he lived must have stood upon the lot when he purchased it and have been in fact a house which fell into the general category of "edifices" in the deed from John Wells in 1733.



12. ASHLEY HOUSE. Interior before restoration. Based on sketches made by the artist before 1945, this drawing shows the front hall in the tobacco warehouse.

After having been used as a tobacco warehouse and storage place for farm machinery since 1869, Parson Ashley's house in 1945, although its main frame was still sound, was a deplorable wreck compared to the house where the minister once entertained distinguished guests. At night silhouetted against the sky, except for the fact that its chimneys had been demolished, it would have presented the outline of a two story gambrel roofed house of one room deep, not entirely unrecognizable to the Reverend Jonathan Ashley. By morning light, however, this deception was no longer possible. Clapboards, loose and curled up,

covered the front and two sides, while the back was merely boarded up in the manner typical of barn covering. To accommodate farm wagons, the front entrance had been widened and there was no trace of the original doors. Boards were nailed over most of the window openings.

Upon entering, one stepped directly onto a dirt floor; no cellar had been dug and the old floor boards had been removed. At first glance it looked to be a large, cavernous, empty barn, whose skeleton of posts and girts and plates was visible everywhere, bare and uncovered, unconnected for the main part by partitions, doors or even studding.

In what had been the front hall, the stairway was gone and a large three story cavity was open to the attic rafters. A rickety farm ladder rested against a horizontal girt, giving access to the second floor, now a loft, where loose boards lying across remaining joists permitted farm hands to hang racks of drying tobacco leaves.

To the discerning eye, however, hints that this was in reality no ordinary barn were obvious and intriguing.<sup>4</sup> Some pieces of raised paneling were still in place; remains of beam casings had survived and were covered with dingy paint. Jagged fragments of plaster still clung to some walls, and consequently neither had the laths entirely disappeared.

Although everything that remained in the tobacco shed in 1945 from the former eighteenth century minister's home was important as far as the eventual restoration was concerned, certain traces of the eighteenth century house were especially relevant for purposes of tracing the architectural evolution of the house and for supplementing and confirming what the John Wells deed of 1733 and the Parson's accountings implied.

Inside the tobacco shed it was possible to see what the clapboards concealed on the exterior. The entire front and both ends of the house were constructed of vertical plank siding as a substitute for a stud frame, the more commonly preferred system of New England housewrights. Unquestionably there once were other plank framed houses in Deerfield, but Parson Ashley's house is the only one now known to have survived. Methods of joining planks to the frame of a house seem to vary according to the region and a particular builder's taste. In the case of the Ashley House, each plank was rabbeted to the sills at the bottom

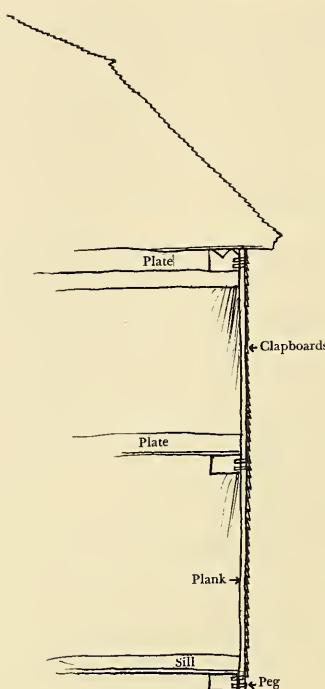
and secured with wooden pegs. The girts and plates above were also pegged; no nails were used in the frame.

Although houses of plank construction were built in the seventeenth century, this form of building was used as late as the mid-nineteenth century, and therefore, while interesting, offers no comment as to the date of Jonathan Ashley's house.<sup>5</sup>

But the existence of a plank frame proved invaluable in determining the original exterior dimensions of the house by showing that in addition to the two remaining downstairs rooms, a leanto on the back of the house at the north side, although torn away, probably when the house was moved in 1869, had been an original part of the house. There were no planks remaining on the back side of the house when it was a tobacco shed, but dowel holes, into which wooden pegs had once fitted to secure planks to the rear plate, appeared on the southern part of this plate. Therefore, since this southern part had once held planks, it had been an exterior wall when the house was built. However, on the northern end of the rear plate, no such dowel holes for planks existed, thus indicating not only that a partial leanto had been an original part of the house, but also defining the exact length of the leanto. Moreover, a general consistency in the method of framing and the size of the members indicated that the remaining front four rooms, two up and two down, had been built at the same time.

Within the fabric of the house itself other signs in the tobacco shed helped to trace the development of the house. Even though there was nothing left of any chimney, either above or below the roof, it was perfectly clear that there had been two interior side chimneys and a center hall. In the two downstairs rooms brick debris and mortar still clung to the chimney girts, and upstairs in the north chamber several oversized bricks, which measured twelve inches in length, lay on the loose make-shift floor. In the attic, breaks in the rafters made it obvious where the two chimneys had once pierced the roof.

This visual evidence regarding the basic floor plan was supported by a description of the house written by the historian, George Sheldon, who lived for many years in the house next south of the Ashleys and whose recollections must have been vivid and accurate since he was fifty-one years old before the house was moved in 1869. He wrote, "The front hall led right through the house to the outside," stating also that there were two chimneys in the front part of the house.<sup>6</sup>



13. ASHLEY HOUSE. Plank framing. Planks were secured to the frame with wooden pegs.

When clapboards were removed from around the front entrance, it became apparent that there had once been a broken scroll pedimented doorway on the front, since discoloration on the planking traced the pattern. A carpenter, who helped to remove the clapboards, called it a "squirl design."<sup>7</sup>

To the right of the front entrance in the hall there stood a partition, which once separated the hall from the right hand room. It was the only remaining partition in the house. Consisting of a solid wall of vertical rectangular raised panels, it reached from floor to ceiling, and now set off a tobacco sorting room from the rest of the barn.<sup>8</sup>

In this sorting room to the right, the summer beam still carried its casings, and much of the cornice moulding around the ceiling of the room was also still in place. On the rear wall, the entire chimney breast



14. ASHLEY HOUSE. Long braces in the southwest corner of the attic indicate early construction. Bees entered through the slot on the left.

panelling had been removed, but there was indisputable evidence to show that pilasters had once flanked the fireplace.

On the front and side outside walls of what had been the left hand room there was still a wainscot dado of raised panels reaching to the level of the windows.

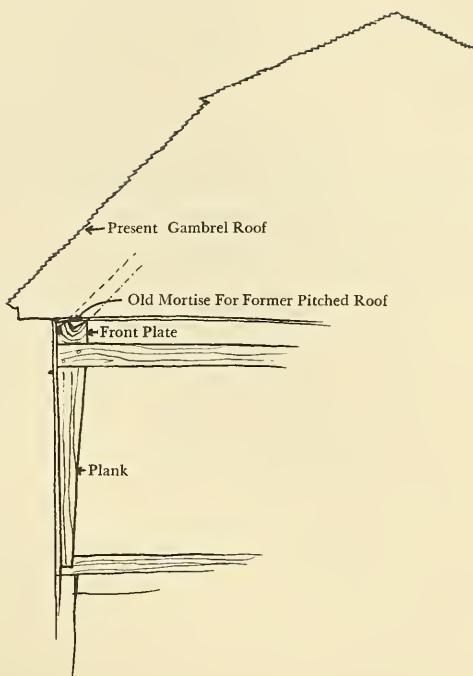
If this tobacco warehouse, disfigured as it was in 1945, is to be accepted as the house built by John Wells before Parson Ashley bought the lot in 1733, certain of these architectural features immediately become difficult to reconcile with so early a date as 1733.

The use of the gambrel type roof on a house of this size and proportion does not appear in the Connecticut Valley much before 1740,<sup>9</sup> and it would have been equally unlikely that any house in this section should have a scroll pedimented frontispiece until about 1745 at the earliest. This style of doorway was not really prominent here until the 1750's.<sup>10</sup> The whole general plan of a center hall with two side chimneys is also difficult to reconcile with the period 1726-1733 in Deerfield. Furthermore, interior trim which included raised panelled dado, pilasters flanking a fireplace and cased or boxed in framing timbers was characteristic of the mid-eighteenth century in western New England.

In spite of these signs which seem to deny that the house was built as early as 1733 by John Wells, there were traces of an earlier house to support evidence in the deeds and in the Parson's accounts. The whole framework of the house was heavy, the posts unusually large, the summer beams unusually wide, while braces on the frame were exceptionally long. The wide overhanging cornice on the front of the house was also an indication of early construction.

The explanation for this seeming conflict of later architectural styles with an apparent construction date prior to 1733 is not difficult. Each characteristic which points to early construction involves a part of the structural framework, while most indications of a later house are of a somewhat decorative nature. Without disturbing the essential frame of the early house, it was entirely possible for Parson Ashley to have effected substantial alterations both inside and out.

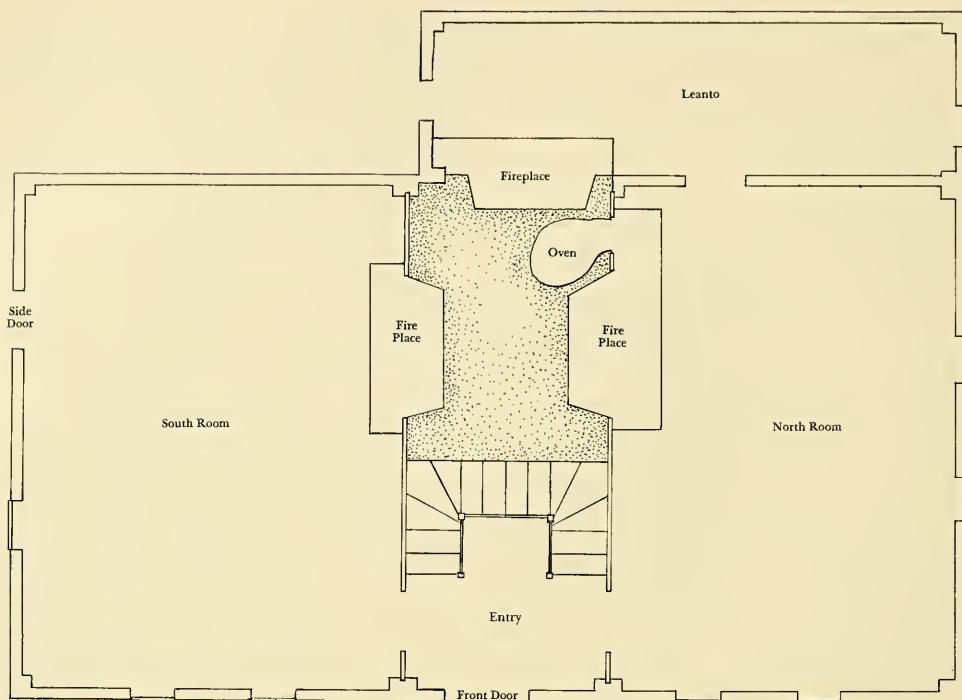
Mortises for rafters on the front and rear plates of the second story show that when first built the house had a simple pitched roof rather than the present gambrel. This alteration, which at first seems quite drastic, could have been executed without interfering with the existing frame, and without leaving any evidence other than the mortises for



15. ASHLEY HOUSE. Mortises on the front plate once held rafters for a pitched roof which preceded the present gambrel form.

rafters.<sup>11</sup> It is probable that an original center chimney was pulled down when the roof was changed, to be replaced by two side chimneys and a center hallway. With the original pitched roof gone much evidence of the former center chimney was naturally destroyed. Subsequent destruction of floors, foundations and cellar in 1869 eliminated other traces.<sup>12</sup> A pedimented frontispiece and ornamental panelling could have been added at any time after the house was built.

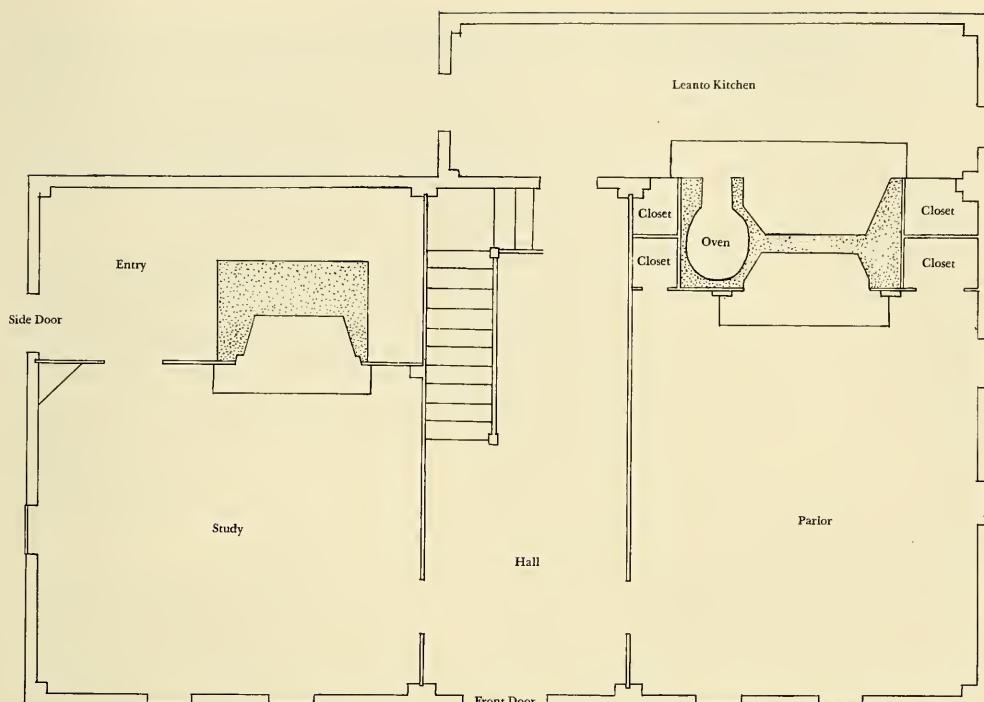
The fact that alterations and improvements occurred during the lifetime of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, as he endeavored to decorate his home according to the latest fashion, is entirely logical and in keeping with a man of his standing, and can furthermore be verified by constant minor construction credits in his account book. Never sufficient to indicate that an entire house was built, frequent small purchases of brick, lime, glass and laths do show that work was being done periodically.



16. ASHLEY HOUSE. Plan of house as it may have looked when built by John Wells, 1726-1733.

In 1733, the very year that Jonathan Ashley bought the house, he purchased a quantity of nails from Samuel Barnard of Salem and immediately began to improve his property.<sup>13</sup> In 1751 he spent £25 for house repair<sup>14</sup> and the next year, 1752, he purchased a thousand bricks for £6-2-6, one half load of stone and three hundred "Weather Bricks" for £2-5-0.<sup>15</sup> Although this relatively small number of bricks could certainly not account for the building of two entire chimneys, on the other hand Jonathan already had many thousands of bricks from the original center chimney which were available for re-use. In 1753 he paid James Couch and Aaron Scott, both joiners, a total of £9 for some unspecified work,<sup>16</sup> and in 1754 John Catlin, a housewright, was credited with mending the roof and laying a floor.<sup>17</sup>

On May 5, 1755, Ashley bought fifteen bushels of lime and on May



17. ASHLEY HOUSE. Plan showing probable changes made by the Reverend Jonathan Ashley.

7 he paid for having lime mortar made and for laths.<sup>18</sup> Since clay was the material used for chimney construction below the roof line in Deerfield at least until the Revolution, this large quantity of lime was probably used for plaster, as the minister finished off one or more of his rooms.

From May through August of 1757, Parson Ashley bought 1,200 four penny nails, or lath nails,<sup>19</sup> and 500 ten penny nails, a size necessary for heavy construction. In 1757, he also bought 250 feet of boards and 734 shingles,<sup>20</sup> and moreover he owed £32-18-9 to Benjamin Munn, a joiner.<sup>21</sup> Since this is the largest sum that he ever paid for any joiner at one time, it seems entirely probable that in this year Benjamin Munn redecorated the Ashley parlor with a pilastered chimney breast wall and also designed and built a broken scroll pedimented doorway for the

front entrance. Comparable work known to have been done on other houses of the same period indicate that this price is perfectly appropriate for two such pieces of joinery work.

As early as 1758 Parson Ashley was buying seven by nine inch panes or lights of glass,<sup>22</sup> but only in small quantities, as if he were slowly replacing or repairing smaller window panes.

Weighing and evaluating all the evidence, both that which could be seen in the tobacco shed and that which was found in contemporary written sources, the gambrel roofed barn of 1945 can be accepted as a house built by John Wells before 1733, but a house which was greatly improved during the lifetime of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley. This house always consisted of four rooms, two up and two down, and a leanto on the north side of the back of the house, but it was originally built as a central chimney house with a pitched roof and was later converted into a grander form by the Parson as styles changed.

Nor were all changes made during the Parson's lifetime. Doctor Elihu Ashley, who moved into the family home shortly after his father's death in 1780, first repaired the barn, hog pen and shay house.<sup>23</sup> In 1781 he had the corn house moved<sup>24</sup> and in 1787 Elihu had an ell built onto the back of the house.<sup>25</sup>

After the death of Elihu Ashley in 1817, changes continued to take place all during the nineteenth century until 1869 when the house was moved. Then the most drastic change of all occurred—the conversion of the old house into a tobacco barn.

It is known, for instance, that before it was moved there was a book-case built into the front hall, which had glass doors<sup>26</sup> and that Colonel Thomas Williams Ashley had the first cook stove in Deerfield, sometime before 1825.<sup>27</sup> Fresh paint was applied to worn and chipped paneling, and probably Franklin stoves were fitted into the old fireplaces. Fine samples of nineteenth century wallpaper were found in the tobacco shed.<sup>28</sup>

These nineteenth century alterations are interesting insofar as they comment on the taste of later generations of the Ashley family, and had they not been stripped away with all the rest in 1869, they would have provided valuable information concerning the styles of the last century in Deerfield. Knowledge of these later changes points out that each generation of the Ashley family was important to the history of the house, each reflected the tastes of his own time, and each contributed

in some way to events which led to the restoration of 1945, but otherwise this knowledge is of little value in a restoration which concerns the eighteenth century.

# The Ashleys' House

1869-1948

WHEN ACTUAL restoration of the old tobacco warehouse was first contemplated in 1945, no one minimized the importance or the difficulty of the task.<sup>1</sup> Skill and scholarship were essential for authenticity, but not alone sufficient. Imagination must wrestle with the unknown in this resolve to recapture the eighteenth century home of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley.

Architecturally the restoration was to concentrate, not on the nebulous "edifices" which John Wells sold in 1733, but on the house of two chimneys and a center hall which the Deerfield minister occupied until 1780. Decoratively no one period was to be conspicuous. Jonathan Ashley had lived for forty-seven years in the house and the restoration was to illustrate his evolving taste and means during all these years.

This would be no ordinary restoration where peeling away plaster might uncover a panelled wall, where removing later filled in brick would open an early cooking fireplace, or where scraping off superficial layers of paint could expose previous marbleizing. On the other hand, there was no problem of what later decorative details must be sacrificed for the sake of a purely eighteenth century restoration.

Somehow out of the derelict tobacco barn with its dirt floor, its vast open emptiness, its haunting remnants of panelling must come factual evidence of the room Jonathan Ashley had once used for his study and there preached to negro slaves; of the parlor where roast pig and tea were served; and of the chambers where six children and students for the ministry had once slept. Every shred of evidence was important, every old lath and piece of plaster. Furthermore, no available documentary source could be neglected to confirm or deny visual conclusions.

Three thoughts guided the restoration. First, it was apparent that the task was actually far more of a reconstruction than a restoration and as such would necessitate to a great degree the use of old materials, boards, panelling, brick, that could be salvaged from other houses comparable in period and style.

Secondly, there was an awareness that even the most careful study and interpretation of surviving evidence and the most thorough search into documentary sources could not possibly produce an exact duplication of Parson Ashley's house. Where available information eventually stopped and absolute accuracy was impossible, a knowledge of eighteenth century western New England houses would have to determine the outcome.

Lastly, it was felt that although the reconstruction dealt essentially with the past and with history, it should not ignore the present and the future. To restore and thereby eliminate all possible use as a dwelling would be to take a short-sighted view. Modern improvements and conveniences, if tastefully concealed, could not detract from the overall eighteenth century impression, but would endow the house with a justifiable versatility.

On September 18, 1945, the 1869 house was moved down the street on a trailer.<sup>2</sup> A large audience witnessed this spectacular move as telephone and electric wires were adjusted. In its course the suspended structure came dangerously close to overhanging elms along the street before it was set down near the center of the town and near the center of the Deerfield Academy campus. Although less sensational than this move, bringing the tobacco warehouse from its place in the corn field back to its original site presented a far more complicated problem of engineering. It was first necessary to raise the old house and replace rotted sills. This being done, the house was bound with an enormous steel cable, and then lowered onto rollers by which means it was slowly maneuvered onto its original site where a new foundation had been prepared. Three weeks were required to accomplish the move, but once back on the town street, although as yet unaltered in appearance, the old tobacco warehouse seemed to become once again the Ashleys' house, rather than the Ashleys' barn.<sup>3</sup>

When word of the projected restoration went around and when various members of the Ashley family and residents of the town were interviewed,<sup>4</sup> there was hope that pieces of the old panelling, window shutters, perhaps even the front doors could be located. Every effort was made to follow all suggestions, every clue was considered important; but after investigation and correspondence, each possibility was unrewarding. So far nothing has been regained in the way of archi-

tectural material that could be positively identified as having come from the old Ashley house.<sup>5</sup>

Everyone who remembered stories about the old house or who had ever explored the tobacco shed was interested and helpful, especially those of the Ashley family.<sup>6</sup>

Knowledge increased as work was begun. When clapboards were removed, reconstruction of the exterior was greatly simplified by the existence of plank siding which had previously indicated the presence of a rear leanto on the north side of the back and confirmed the fact that this leanto was contemporary with the building of the house. The planking now indicated that there had been no change in the location of the windows at any time. Although all windows had probably been enlarged by the Parson in the 1750's to accommodate seven by nine inch panes of glass, there had always been five across the front of the house and five on the north side, including one in the attic gable. On the south side there had always been four windows and a side door. Several old windows survived which contained six over six panes of the seven by nine inch glass. These were too rotted to use in the restoration, but were, however, carefully duplicated.

Discoloration on the planks over the front entrance not only indicated the former presence of a pedimented doorway, but also defined its size and proportions. From these marks it was possible to determine the original width of the front entrance, which had been enlarged after 1869 for farm convenience. The original opening was sufficiently wide to confirm what style demanded—there had unquestionably once been double leaf doors.<sup>7</sup> Not copied from any one doorway in particular, the restored frontispiece is a composite of decorative motifs consistent with those found in western New England in the mid-eighteenth century.

Characteristically accompanying an elaborate frontispiece was a simplified version on the side entrance. A side doorway was designed for the Ashley House with this precedent in mind, although no conclusive proof of its former presence could be found.

The entire roof covering was rotted and patched, but since it dated only from the time of the 1869 move, its replacement meant no loss of original material.

Most of the clapboards on the tobacco shed were in no better condition than the roof. Although a few were saved and re-used on the

south side, they were not the original clapboards and the necessity of replacing the majority was not serious.

If any of the original outside wall covering had remained, a provocative statement made by Charissa Ashley might have been explained. She wrote to her brother, Elihu, in 1775, "Sir you are expected at the Blue house some moon shine night. . . ."<sup>8</sup> But any means of proving that the clapboards which covered Jonathan Ashley's house in 1775 were blue or stone color was destroyed long ago, for another letter testifies that the clapboards of 1775 were replaced in 1800. Cynthia Leffingwell wrote to her sister, Polly Ashley, in this year, saying, ". . . you wrote me word that you was about covering your house I suppose you will look so grand the next time I see you that I shall have to come cap in hand. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Traces of white paint could be seen under the front cornice,<sup>10</sup> but since this paint probably related to the 1800 clapboards or even later, and since the earlier blue color of 1775 was probably applied in the Parson's later years, it seemed preferable to leave the clapboards unpainted.

With irrefutable evidence as to their location and dimensions, the two chimneys were rebuilt with old bricks. When they were completed the house once again assumed from the outside a satisfying appearance of stability.

After the outside was completed, sand was power blown against the clapboards to help create the impression of age.

Reconstruction of the interior was infinitely more complicated and exacting than the outside work had been, since so much had been removed. Yet actually enough remained, fragments, mortises and imprints, to afford ample means of determining the appearance of Jonathan Ashley's home, even if most of the fabric itself was gone.

Before attempting the specific and detailed restoration of each room, general observations as to the physical composition of the old house were thoughtfully considered from the point of view of what could be feasibly restored with old materials and what should be replaced with reasonable reproductions for the sake of practicality and durability.

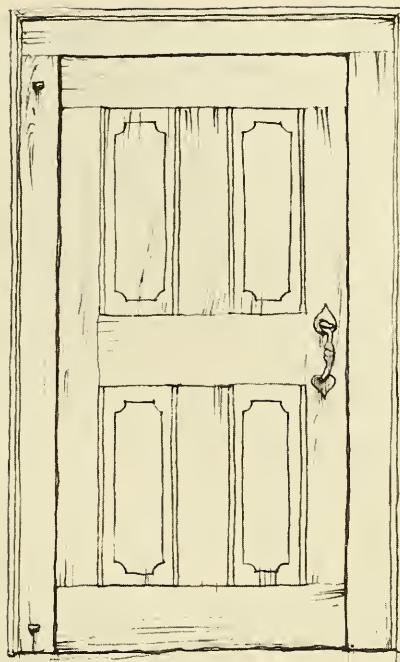
The frame itself, solid and intact in the existing main body of the house, needed only slight repairs, while that of the destroyed leanto was rebuilt of old wood. Remaining casings for the frame and cornice mouldings were sufficient to provide patterns for necessary replacements throughout the house. These again were made of old wood.



18. ASHLEY HOUSE. North side about 1912. An interior window shutter and a door are visible in the windows.

Since the downstairs floors were completely gone and those upstairs worn and cracked, every floor was re-laid using old boards of random width and length. None of the interior window shutters remained, but these again were reproduced with old wood. An early photograph of the tobacco shed supplied the design and precedent.<sup>11</sup>

Only one door was in the barn in 1945 which could conceivably have come from the house.<sup>12</sup> It stood on the south side entrance, but unquestionably it had once been an interior door having probably been re-located at the time of the 1869 move. Because it was panelled in a style of the late eighteenth century and because it was rotted and weathered, it was not incorporated in the restored house. All doors were made of old wood, uniformly designed of two panels, a style consistent with eighteenth century styles in Deerfield.

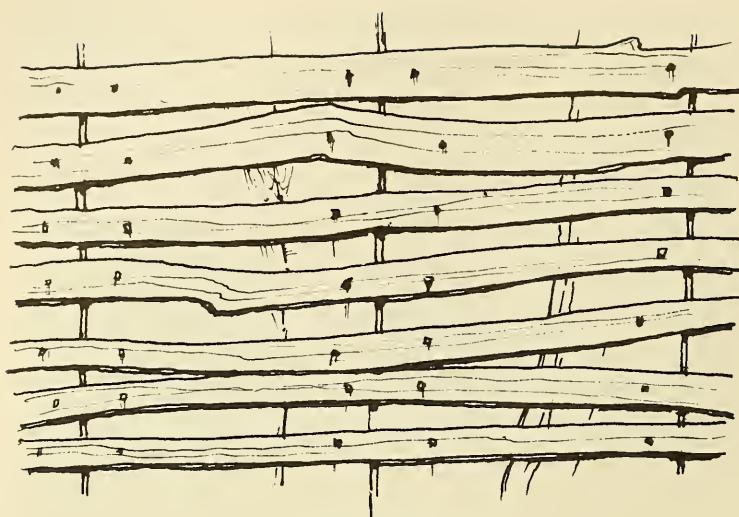


19. ASHLEY HOUSE. Door found on south side entrance in 1945.

The plaster that remained was of a hair and lime mixture, and although unsalvagable, clearly designated where plaster should be restored throughout the house. In this case it was impractical to consider re-plastering with anything but present day materials, and equally imprudent so far as the laths underneath were concerned.

Fragments of two types of laths were found. The majority, a narrow, flat hand-riven sort, were typical of pre-Revolutionary Deerfield. A few, however, were made of round saplings, merely split in half and nailed directly to the plank siding with their flat sides exposed to hold the plaster. Subsequent inquiry has failed to discover any other laths of this variety in Deerfield or elsewhere.

Remaining ceiling joists, traces of brick debris and breaks in the attic rafters had rendered the location and size of the fireplaces easily discernible as well as the fact that the original mortar below the roof had been clay. Just as the chimneys above the roof had been re-built of old brick, so were the great square masses and fire boxes below, but for clay



Front View



Profile View

20. ASHLEY HOUSE. Sapling laths found in south room.

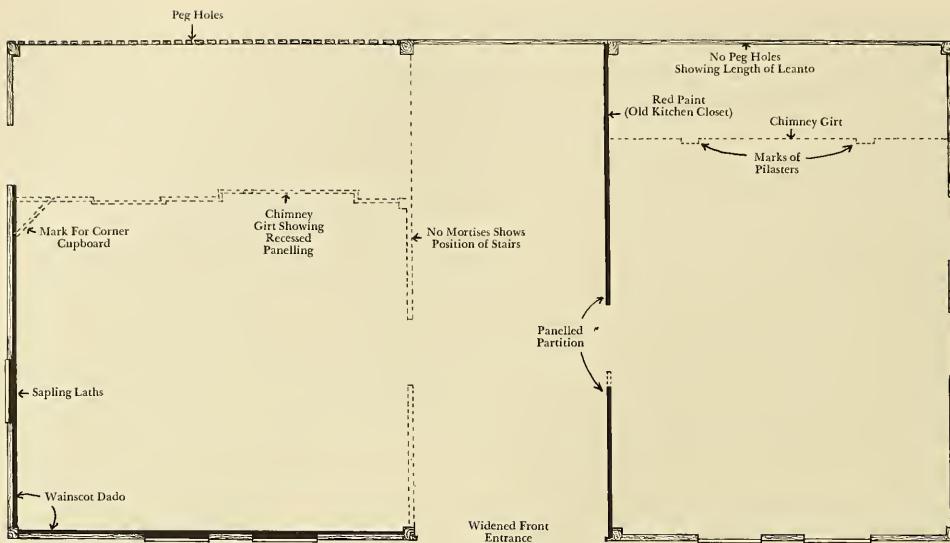
a modern cement and lime mortar was substituted. Although the original hearths were unquestionably of stone or tile,<sup>13</sup> none of the original stones could be found.<sup>14</sup> Since it was impossible to find old stones which exactly met the dictated proportions of the Ashley hearths, a compromise was necessary and the hearths were re-laid in brick.

Hardware was designed and reproduced to duplicate hinges and latches found in the old house, the old ones being too rusted to use. Visible nails were also reproductions of original wrought nails.

An accumulation of spider webs, small animal footprints, silt and dust contrived to give all casings and remaining panels in the tobacco shed a uniform grey appearance in 1945. But gouges of varying depth betrayed the fact that all decorative woodwork was covered with at least three, often five coats of paint. When these superficial layers were removed the first color was ubiquitously a yellow ochre. An aged quality under some of the yellow ochre suggested that originally some panels had not been painted; they were therefore restored with a natural wood finish. Colors used in the main part of the house are frankly not authentic to the particular rooms in which they appear, but were never-



21. ASHLEY HOUSE. Stairway during restoration, 1945.



22. ASHLEY HOUSE. Plan of house showing material and evidence in 1945.

theless found in other Deerfield houses and were chosen for their decorative qualities.

Scraps of wallpaper were carefully saved and some patterns were reproduced, but since they were nineteenth century papers the copies were not used in the house.<sup>15</sup>

Conclusions respecting fundamental materials having been reached, there followed the intricate process of re-assembling the individual rooms. Since the basic frame was undisturbed in the four front rooms of the house, there could be no doubt as to the location of any main partition. Mortises and outlines in the old paint clearly defined the position of each wall and even conveyed precise information concerning the actual character of the walls.

Placed on the center of the outside, the front door is off-center in the entrance hall. The fact that the left hand or south room is wider than the right is responsible for this arrangement. On the right side of the hall a complete wall of floor to ceiling raised panels remained untouched except for one strip about a foot wide, which had been cut away to widen the door opening when the right room was used for to-



23. ASHLEY HOUSE. Front hall, 1962. From the front entrance original panelling can be seen on right.

bacco sorting. Repair work was necessary, but essentially this entire wall appears as it was found in the barn. On the left side of the hall the entire partition was missing but the panelling presumably matched that on the right and as such it was replaced with panels made of old wood.

George Sheldon wrote that the stairway was on the left side of the hall<sup>16</sup> and his testimony was borne out by evidence on the left hand girt which had no mortises for ceiling joists beginning at a point about half way to the back of the hall. The stairway itself was designed in the style of other houses in the region. Although there was no direct evidence for the gun niche toward the bottom of the steps, similar inserts can be found in several Deerfield houses.<sup>17</sup>

The chimney on the left side had stood farther to the front of the house than that on the right, to allow space for an entryway on the south side. Although broader than the right room the left room is shorter because of this entry. Lath marks on the planks showed that the entry was originally plastered on the outside wall, but vertical feather edged sheathing was restored to all four walls. Again the gun niche was not indicated but based on precedent. Near the south doorway a hinged panel was designed to permit a view of the plank siding.

In the south room itself, the two outside walls still retained a wainscot dado of rectangular raised panels which came to the level of the windows. With certain inevitable repair work, these panels are almost entirely original. It was in the southeast corner of this room that the sapling laths were discovered. Fragments of yellow wallpaper were also visible in this same corner. Elsewhere, throughout the house, surviving laths were of the more conventional hand riven type.

Although the entire chimney breast wall had been removed, an outline of paint on the soffit or underneath side of the chimney girt showed clearly the exact panelling design of this wall. Evident was the former existence of two cupboards, one on either side of the fireplace, as well as the exact location and size of the fireplace. In addition, the soffit showed that the panelling directly above the fireplace had been slightly recessed. Panelling now over this fireplace was taken from a house in New Hampshire.

It was also plain from marks on the cornice that a cupboard had once stood in the southwest corner of the room. A member of the family remembered hearing of it and that it had once been a "pinkish" color.<sup>18</sup> Casings were largely intact but needed extensive repairs.



24. ASHLEY HOUSE. Study, 1962. Original wainscot dado remains on east wall.

Because of its accessibility to the out-of-doors and because according to all signs it was not so elaborate as the room on the north side of the house, this room was furnished to resemble the study of Parson Ashley.

Across the hall the north room had been the sorting room in the barn, but traces of former elegance indicated that it was once the Ashley parlor. The solid panelled partition which separated it from the hall was designed so that the same stiles and rails accommodated raised panels back-to-back on both sides. On one of these panels in the north room Solomon Ashley, the gravestone cutter, once incised a six-point star.

In this room the soffit of the chimney girt casing again helped to determine the character of the chimney breast panelling. On the soffit were outlines to show where pilasters had stood on either side of the

fireplace and also where cupboards were located at either end of this west wall. Plaster remained on the ceiling of each cupboard but nothing more which related to their function or description. Since two eighteenth century shell carved cupboards or bofats have survived in Deerfield,<sup>19</sup> and since such a cupboard would have been entirely in keeping with the quality of Parson Ashley's house, it was decided to incorporate these decorative elements into the restoration. While the pilasters are not replicas of any existing ones, but merely designed in the general style of the period, the shell cupboards are hand carved replicas of one formerly in the home of Major Elijah Williams. Most of the casings for the framework in this room had been left in the tobacco shed; the summer beam and cornice casings and mouldings are essentially original.

In the upstairs hall there was no evidence that a room had ever been set off over the front hall. The walls had been plastered, but that which remained was laid over split laths, a type not found in Deerfield before 1778.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, this hall plaster was probably a decorative improvement planned by Doctor Elihu Ashley or even someone of a later generation. It likely replaced earlier panelling or sheathing.<sup>21</sup>

In the entire upstairs nothing remained of a decorative nature which could be identified with the eighteenth century. Both of the chambers had been plastered from floor to ceiling, but the plaster, like that in the upper hall, was applied to split laths, again probably replacing an earlier wall covering, panelled or sheathed. On the south girt of the north chamber there was evidence of a fire, although apparently not a serious one, since the other side of the girt in the hall was not burned. Nevertheless this fire may explain the disappearance of some of the earlier panelling in the north chamber.

Although all casings were gone in the upstairs, outlines of cornice mouldings<sup>22</sup> as well as nail holes and the fact that every framing timber was roughly finished proved that casings were always intended. To exhibit the method of hewing and the general size of the frame, casings were omitted in the restoration of the south chamber.

Behind the south chamber chimney there was considerable space which corresponded to the south side entry below. However, there was no way of determining exactly how this space had been utilized. Closets appeared to have stood on either side of the fireplace,<sup>23</sup> but the present arrangement of a small children's room or dressing room is not without precedent in western New England.<sup>24</sup>



25. ASHLEY HOUSE. Parlor, 1962. Casings on summer beam and cornice are original.

In the hall the placement of mortises indicated the position of the original attic stairs. Interesting for purposes of studying the heavy and early construction of the house, here in the attic braces of noticeable length support the frame. A small horizontal slot in the south gable has attracted much attention. It was probably a hole through which bees could enter. Records show that Deerfield families kept bee hives in their attics.<sup>25</sup>

The absence of dowel holes for plank siding on the north side of the back of the house indicated that the original leanto had extended as far as the south partition of the main center hall. Even though it was possible to fix the length of the leanto, its height and breadth could not be positively determined.<sup>26</sup>



26. ASHLEY HOUSE. Work on shell cupboard, 1945. Two such hand carved cupboards in the parlor are replicas of one formerly in a Deerfield house.

On the other hand there could be little doubt that the Parson's cooking fireplace had been in the leanto. Originally the leanto had probably been all one room, but in 1781 it was partitioned and the front hallway was extended through to the back of the house.<sup>27</sup>

The right hand cupboard of the north parlor was divided and also served as a cupboard for the leanto kitchen. Here in the cupboard on the north wall vertical sheathing boards, unbeaded and unfinished in any way, were painted a dark red color and indicated that the kitchen had once been painted red or spanish brown. The ceiling over the kitchen part of this cupboard was unplastered and the boards were smoked and black.<sup>28</sup>

The leanto served as the Ashley kitchen until 1787, at which time Doctor Elihu Ashley built an ell on the south side of the house and converted the old leanto kitchen into a bedroom.<sup>29</sup> In 1787 Cynthia Lefingwell wrote a letter from Norwich, Connecticut, in which she commented to her sister, Polly Ashley, ". . . I want to know whether you have got your Kitchen up, and whether it arnt very Clever to have a new one. . . ."<sup>30</sup> This ell along with the leanto was destroyed when the house was moved back from the street in 1869.

According to a description written by George Sheldon the ell was gambrel roofed and extended west of the main house, being almost identical to the ell on the house of Doctor Thomas Williams, father of Polly Ashley.<sup>31</sup> Concerning its interior arrangement Sheldon wrote,

You start from the St [reet] to go in, with a small gate — You will see a bulkhead under the south window . . . then you come to south door . . . You go along & come to 2 windows then a door that leads into kitchen then you come to "well room," . . . Standing in the middle room (dining room) which was "Grandma's" you would see a fireplace on the West side in the northwest corner a window which leads out to the stoop . . . We go out of south door to go to middle door entry — Kitchen entry — open door & go into kitchen. On our left is a door into "well room" kitchen isn't very wide — go straight ahead — west — & come to pantry door turn to right pass two windows looking west. Keep on NW corner run against corner of room & turn to right looking north — here is door into a stoop — keep on to right next to door is a window, under the window is Cato's seat . . . Look east & you see the oven which reaches through to Grandma's room & to the right is the big fireplace — still farther to the right pair of stairs leading down cellar — so we have got round to where we went in. . . .<sup>32</sup>



27. ASHLEY HOUSE. South chamber, 1962. The crewel work was done by an Ashley relative. The wig stand once belonged to Elijah Williams of Deerfield.

The room referred to as Grandma's room was the kitchen when Elihu Ashley first built the ell and the room behind it was probably used for a summer kitchen, since both rooms had a cooking oven.

A map of the town of Deerfield made in 1855<sup>33</sup> shows that the ells of both the Ashley and the Thomas Williams houses, which Sheldon said were practically alike, projected slightly south of the line of the main house. This extension was originally caused by the well room adjoining the south side of these two ells.

Unlike the leanto, which as the Parson's kitchen was an original part of his house, the ell did not exist when Jonathan Ashley was alive, and therefore great latitude was possible in its reconstruction. To re-build the ell as Elihu Ashley's kitchen did not seem feasible when the total



28. ASHLEY HOUSE. North chamber, 1962. Still owned by descendants, the wine glass once belonged to the Reverend Jonathan Ashley.



29. ASHLEY HOUSE. Kitchen, 1962. In the reconstructed leanto kitchen is an Ashley family maple drop-leaf table.

focus was on the life of his father, Parson Ashley. If the ell were to be re-built, however, following more or less original exterior proportions, its interior could be adapted to serve another purpose. With an awareness for Deerfield Academy's need for faculty apartments, the ell was accordingly designed to resemble Elihu Ashley's gambrel roofed kitchen on the outside, while the interior was arranged for comfortable present day living.

Consistent with the original plan, the entire house was also equipped with necessities and conveniences for present day living, if the need should arise. A substantial cellar was dug and cement lined; layers of celotex and building paper were placed between the plank siding and clapboards for insulation, and the house was completely wired for electricity. Heating and plumbing facilities were also installed.

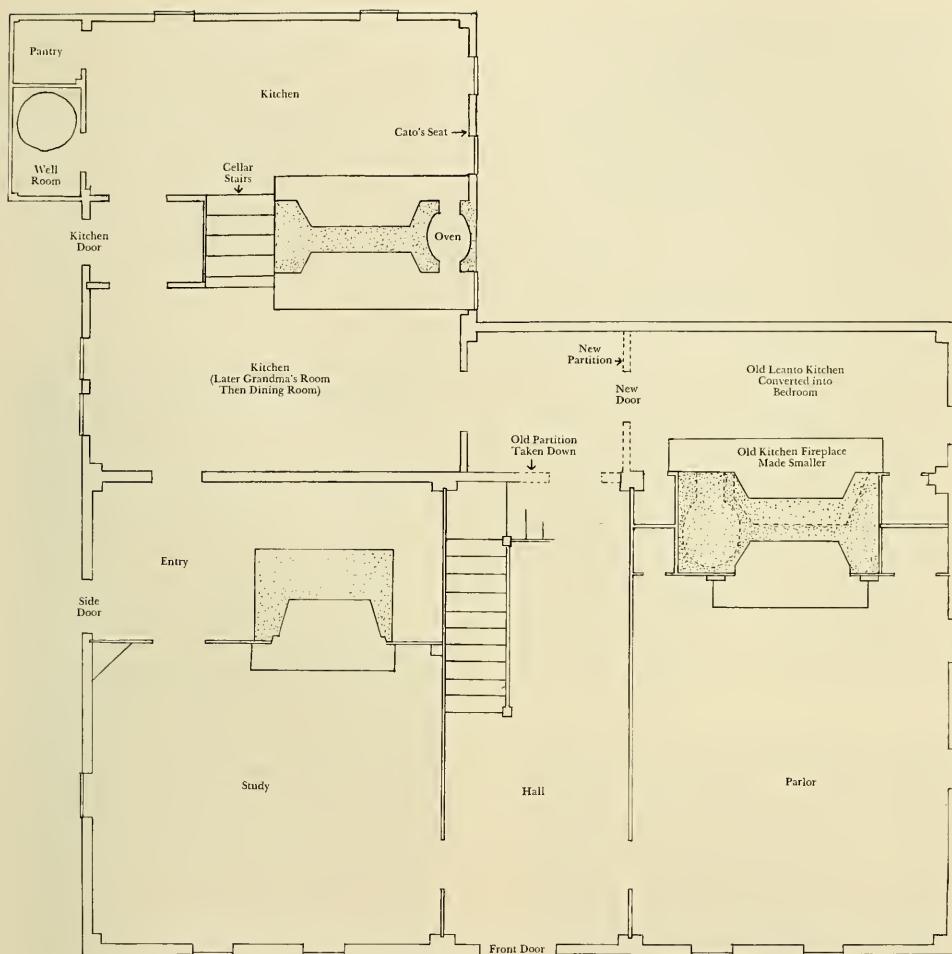
Carefully planned to be unobtrusive, none of these utilities destroy the eighteenth century conception of the Jonathan Ashley home. Radiant heating was installed in the ceilings to avoid unsightly radiators or vents; electric switches were concealed behind panels and bathrooms were tucked into space behind chimneys and in the leanto attic.

While the reconstruction was being accomplished, a search was made to discover how the home of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley had been furnished. An inventory of his personal property taken at his death would have supplied the most accurate information. Unfortunately, although there was a warrant for such an inventory written on November 17, 1780, it was apparently never executed, for no such document appears on file.<sup>34</sup> Nor was there an inventory taken at the death of his son, Elihu.

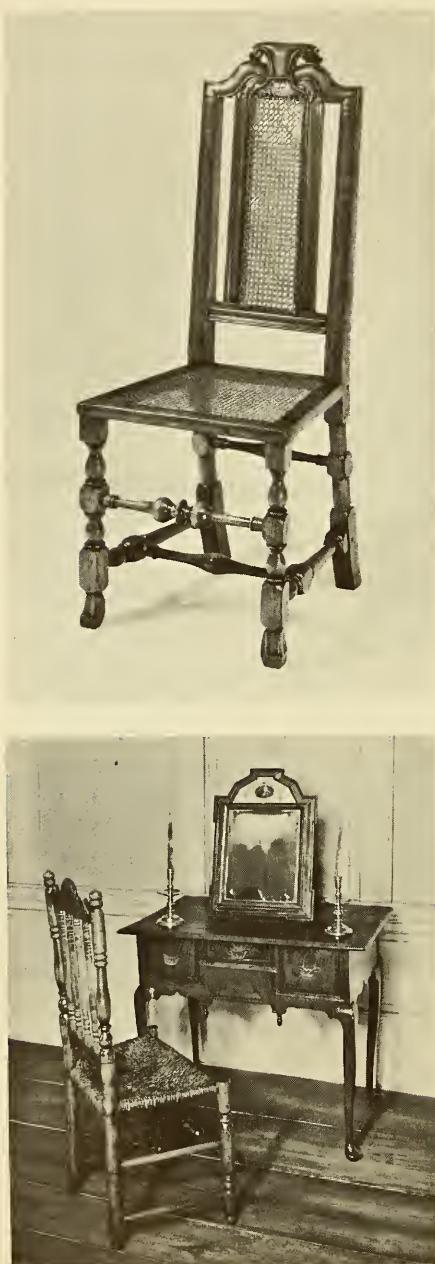
In 1848, however, when the Parson's grandson, Colonel Thomas Williams Ashley died, an inventory of his belongings certainly indicated that many of his possessions had been inherited from his grandfather. Such items as, "one quill looking glass, . . . One old table . . . One old chair and cush . . . One high case with drawers . . . One dressing table . . . One desk & book-case. . . ."<sup>35</sup> clearly apply to the eighteenth century household. Likewise, catalogued with Thomas Ashley's books in 1848 are those which probably belonged to the minister: "Church guide . . . Mahew's Sermons . . . Pemberton's Sermons . . . Christian Phylosopher . . . Exposition of the 39 articles . . . Foster's revelations . . . Watts Sermons. . . ."<sup>36</sup>



30. DOCTOR THOMAS WILLIAMS HOUSE. Ell, 1962. Said to be identical to the original Ashley ell, this surviving one shows the well house projection.



31. ASHLEY HOUSE. Plan of ell and house as altered by Elihu Ashley in 1787, from a description by George Sheldon.



32. ASHLEY FURNITURE: Chair formerly owned by the Reverend Jonathan Ashley. Dressing table formerly owned by the Reverend Jonathan Ashley. Sunflower chest formerly owned by Sarah Chester who married Dorothy Ashley's brother, Israel Williams.

All possible efforts were made to locate anything and everything that had once belonged to Jonathan Ashley. Many interested in the restoration contributed items which had been saved through the years.

Although it was naturally desirable to acquire as much of the original furniture and as many smaller items as possible, the real importance in searching through inventories and in locating family pieces was to learn what sort of furniture had been in Parson Ashley's home from 1733 to 1780 and thereby establish a precedent for refurnishing the house.

Concentrating always on the Parson's entire life rather than on any specific year, furnishings in the house fall into several categories of ever broadening degrees of association with the Reverend Jonathan Ashley. Beginning with the very personal, there are some pieces which actually belonged to the Parson and some which were once owned by his close relatives. Slightly removed, other pieces have come from neighboring Deerfield homes. Still another group is allied geographically, having a history which relates to Connecticut Valley families similar in background and social position to Jonathan Ashley. Finally, some furniture was collected because of stylistic similarity to known family pieces.

The collection includes not only furniture, but all necessities for daily living as well as niceties to render living more pleasant. Needle-work, fabrics, rugs, paintings, books, ceramics, clothing and lighting devices all join to show how food was prepared in the leanto kitchen, to exhibit the sort of desk where Jonathan Ashley might have composed his sermons, the wine glass which he kept beside his bed and the parlor where Tories discussed the alarming events of 1774.

By the spring of 1948 restoration of the Parson Jonathan Ashley House was completed.<sup>37</sup> On the night of Friday April 30, yellow candle-light shone from every window, and torches lit the path to the front door as the people of Deerfield were invited to visit the Ashley House. Inside they saw candlelight on polished panelling, shadows darting on crewel bed hangings, golden brass escutcheons reflecting weird, distorted images, and they sensed that Jonathan Ashley was in the house. Uncertain how to explain what they felt, they tried to reconcile the evoking of ghosts with the awareness of history and only succeeded in knowing that there were whispers in the Ashleys' house.

If shadows and reflections had conjured this consciousness of people in time, the illusion would have vanished when candles were extin-



33. HELEN AND HENRY FLYNT in the Ashley House parlor before the opening in 1948.

guished that first night. But never since the following Tuesday morning, May 4, 1948, when the Ashleys' house was opened as a museum has the house seemed, even to the chance visitor, a house of frozen timbers and wooden objects alone. History, the third dimension, remains to suggest that all good things are related. Once the Reverend Jonathan Ashley tried to teach the ways of God to his people in Deerfield and conceived of a college to bring education to his valley. Later his son, Elihu Ashley, helped to establish Deerfield Academy. A young man who was killed in France in 1918 wanted to teach boys how to live as well as how to solve an algebra problem. Although the reasons which bring people to the Ashley door may seem as diverse as the places from which they come, to study architecture, to learn practical techniques of restoration, to concentrate on a certain phase of the collection, or merely to



34. THE ASHLEY HOUSE at twilight.

enjoy the overall scene of an eighteenth century home, few can leave without understanding that the inescapable and constant factor for over two centuries has been learning.

# ASHLEY FAMILY OF DEERFIELD

\**Owners of Ashley House*

\*REV. JONATHAN ASHLEY  
1712-1780  
M. 1736 Dorothy Williams  
1713-1808

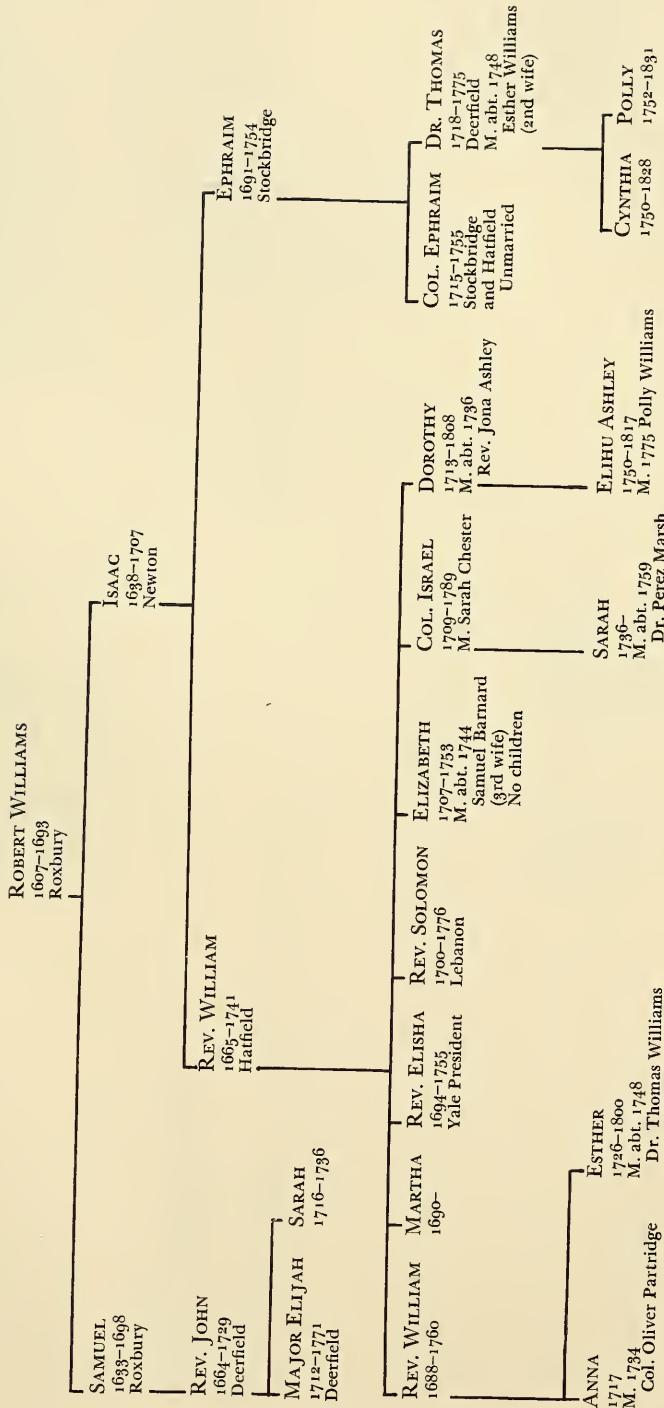
WILLIAM	JONATHAN	WILLIAM	DOROTHY	ELIZABETH	SOLOMON	*ELIJAH	SOLOMON	CHARISSA
B. July 1, 1737	B. Jan. 6, 1738/9	B. Feb. 11, 1740/1	B. Apr. 5, 1743	B. June 9, 1745	B. Sept. 3, 1747	B. July 11, 1750	B. May 25, 1754	B. Dec. 1, 1757
D. Mar. 17, 1737/8	D. May 29, 1738/9	D. Sept. 28, 1742	M. Wm. Williams of Dalton, Dec. 21, 1763	M. Jan. 20, 1783	D. June 23, 1748	D. Mar. 14, 1817	D. Jan. 14, 1833	D. Feb. 8, 1791
M. Nov. 28, 1771	Tirza Field	6 children	David Dickinson	D. Jan. 14, 1808	M. Nov. 2, 1775	Mary Cook Williams (Polly)	Unmarried	Rev. Moses Cook Welsh of Mansfield, Conn.

THOMAS WILLIAMS	ROBERT WILLIAMS
Aug. 16, 1776	B. Apr. 25, 1782
Jan. 6, 1818	D. 1853 at Lyons, N.Y.
	1 daughter—Mary
NANCY	
	B. July 4, 1778
	Smothered in turnup bed
	Jan. 6, 1779

Lydia Crosby (1784-1861)			
* JONATHAN	JOSHUA CROSBEY	MARY	THOMAS WILLIAMS
B. May 17, 1816	B. Mar. 18, 1818	B. Mar. 24, 1820	B. Mar. 31, 1827
B. Oct. 9, 1844	Removed to Iowa	D. Jan. 18, 1822	D. Dec. 21, 1831
She died 1896		D. 1888	Removed to Iowa 1854
			M. Oct. 9, 1844
			Marietta Hoyt, she D. 1849
			M. (2) 1856, Lucinda Larrabee
			Other children settled in Iowa

\*CHARLES HART  
 B. Feb. 1860 in Iowa  
 D. Aug. 11, 1925 in Berfield  
 M. Jan. 2, 1889 Gertrude Porter (1858-1936)

WILLIAMS FAMILY



# WELLS FAMILY

*Showing relationship of  
various members of Wells family  
who owned Lot 2.*

THOMAS WELLS  
1620-1676  
Owned Lot 2

LIEUT. THOMAS WELLS  
1652-1691  
M. 1672 Hepzibah Buel  
(She M. (2) Daniel Belding, 1699  
+ D. 1704 on March to Canada)  
Lived on Lot 2

THOMAS WELLS  
1669-

EBENEZER WELLS  
1669-

THOMAS WELLS  
1693-1744  
M. 1726 Sarah Hawks  
Cordwainer, Physician  
Lived on Lot 3  
1719: Bought Lot 2 from Lieut. Thomas Wells  
1721: Bought Lot 3 from Stebbins creditors  
1721: Sold Lot 2 to Moses Nash  
1732: Gave homelot at Green River to  
cousin John Wells

JOHN WELLS  
1700-1746  
M. abt. 1728 Sarah Allen  
1726: Bought Lot 2 from Moses Nash  
1732: Received homelot at Green River  
from cousin Lieut. Thomas Wells  
1733: Sold Lot 2 to Jonathan Ashley  
1741: Sold Lot 2 to Moses Nash

## STODDARD FAMILY

*Showing Relationship of  
Jonathan Edwards to  
Jonathan Ashley*

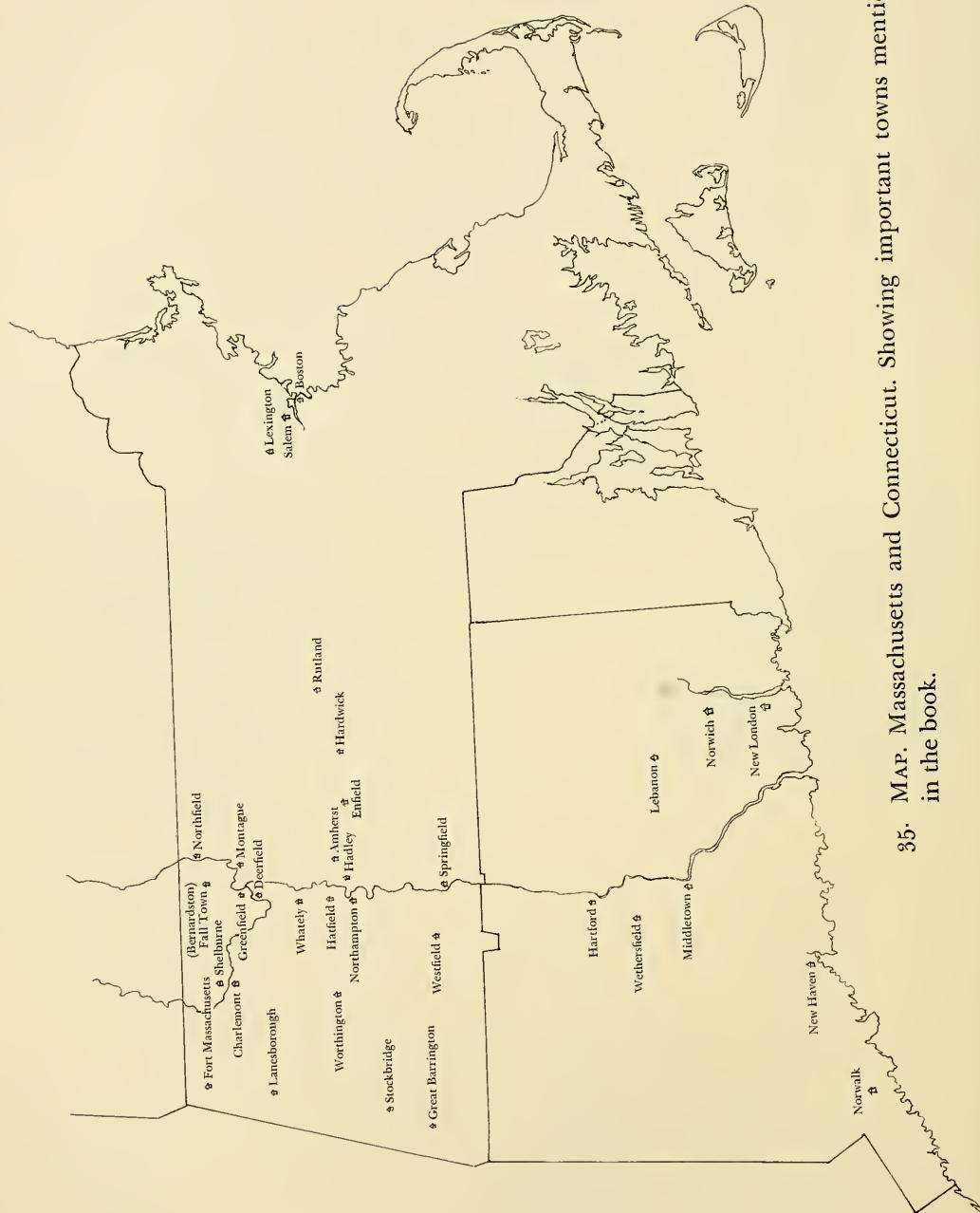
REV. SOLOMON STODDARD  
1643-1729  
Minister at Northampton

ESTHER STODDARD  
1672-1771  
Married 1694  
Rev. Timothy Edwards  
of East Windsor, Conn.

REV. JONATHAN EDWARDS  
1703-1758  
Minister of Northampton, Mass.  
1727-1750

CHRISTIAN STODDARD  
1676-1764  
Married about 1718  
Rev. William Williams  
of Hatfield, Mass.

DOROTHY WILLIAMS  
1713-1808  
Married 1736  
Rev. Jonathan Ashley



35. MAP. Massachusetts and Connecticut. Showing important towns mentioned in the book.

# Notes



## CHAPTER 1. THE TOBACCO WAREHOUSE

1. Mrs. J. A. Woodruff to George Sheldon, Ms. letter, September 6, 1899, Ashley Papers, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield, Mass. Items in this collection hereafter cited at P.V.M.A.
2. Alice Winchester, editorial, *Antiques* (September, 1956), p. 233.
3. For an account of the moving of the 1869 house see the *Greenfield Recorder-Gazette*, September 18, 1945.
4. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1948.

## CHAPTER 2. THE PARSON, JONATHAN ASHLEY, 1712-1780

1. Until an act of Parliament in 1752 declared that the year should begin on January 1, several other dates had been used to denote the beginning of the new year in England and New England, the most common of which was March 25. Since elsewhere in Europe and sometimes in England, January 1 was used, confusion arose as to what year should be assigned the days between January 1 and March 25. To compensate for this discrepancy, New Englanders often gave a double date to all days falling between January 1 and March 25, such as February 27, 1703/4, the first figure denoting the year almost over, which had begun on the previous March 25, and the second figure denoting the year which had commenced on January 1. In the text of this book only single dates are given, following the new style act of Parliament in 1752, but in the case of footnotes in references to manuscripts the date given is that on the original.
2. Rev. E. H. Gillett, "Jonathan Edwards, and the occasion and result of his dismissal from Northampton," *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries concerning The Antiquities, History and Biography of America*, I, no. 6 (June, 1867), 335.
3. John Taylor, "some account of the mischief done by the enemy, in DEERFIELD, and its vicinity, from the death of the Rev. Mr. WILLIAMS, to the conclusion of the last French War," appendix to John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion . . .*, 6th edition with additions (Greenfield, 1800), p. 215. Hereafter cited as Taylor, appendix.
4. Elihu Ashley to Polly Williams, Ms. letter, June 28, 1775, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
5. D. Brinsmade, Ms. letter, March 23, 1747, P.V.M.A.
6. Theophilus Packard, Jr., *A History of the Churches and Ministers and of Franklin Association in Franklin County, Mass.* (Boston, 1854), p. 130. Hereafter cited as Packard, *History*; also Pliny Arms, Ms. *Deerfield History*, ca. 1840, pp. 28-9, P.V.M.A.
7. *Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, 1701-1910* (New Haven, 1910), p. 58.
8. Jonathan Ashley's diploma is now in the Ashley House on loan from the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University.

9. Francis Bacon Trowbridge, *A History of the Descendants of Robert Ashley of Springfield, Massachusetts* (New Haven, 1896), p. 65. Hereafter cited as Trowbridge, *Ashley*. Trowbridge had learned that Jonathan Ashley studied for the ministry during the year following his graduation from Yale, but he was unable to discover where or with whom Ashley received this training. Subsequent research has failed to supplement his statement.
10. William Williams, *The Work of Ministers and the Duty of Hearers, asserted and enforced, in a Sermon Preached at Deerfield, Novemb. 8, 1732 Upon the Ordination of Mr. Jonathan Ashley a Pastor to the Church there* (Boston, 1733). A copy of this printed sermon is now in the Ashley House.
11. John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*. . . . (Boston, 1707). Hereafter cited as *The Redeemed Captive*.
12. The following letter from Cotton Mather of Boston to John Williams, a prisoner in Canada in 1705, belongs to Henry N. Flynt and is quoted in part to show the attitude of New England ministers toward those who suffered in the Deerfield massacre of 1704.

Boston, N. England

6d 5m 1705

You are carried into the Land of the Canadiens for your Good. God has called you to glorify Him in that Land . . . You are continually and affectionately Remembered in y<sup>e</sup> prayers of *New England*. The faithful throughout y<sup>e</sup> Countrey remember you, publickly, privately, Secretly . . . Your calamities are useful . . . They awaken us. Since the fate of *Deerfield*, great things have been done in several parts of New England . . .

*Your Kinsman and Brother,  
Co MATHER*

13. Deerfield town meeting, April 28, 1729, Ms. minutes of town records, P.V.M.A.
14. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1728.
15. The same weather cock is now [1962] on the Brick Church in Deerfield.
16. When the 1729 meeting house was pulled down in 1824 two of these columns were used on a side porch of the Manse in Deerfield. They are now [1962] in Memorial Hall in Deerfield.
17. For a description of the interior of the 1729 meeting house see George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts* . . . 2 vols. (Greenfield, 1895 and 1896), I, 129. Hereafter cited as Sheldon, *History*. Sheldon was living in 1824 when the 1729 meeting house was pulled down and wrote from memory.
18. Stephen West Williams, Ms. *History of Deerfield*, 1836, "Agreement between Jonathan Ashley and the town, August 25, 1732," transcribed from town records then available but since lost, Williams Papers, P.V.M.A.
19. The original deed from John Wells to Jonathan Ashley, signed June 28, 1733, is in the Ashley House. A contemporary copy of the deed can be found in Hampshire County Deeds, Hampden County Registry of Deeds, Springfield, Mass., Book W, 447. Hereafter cited as Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield. Until 1812 Hampshire County comprised the present counties

of Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden. Land records until 1787 for all three counties are kept in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds, Springfield, Mass. After 1787 Franklin County Deeds are located in Greenfield, Mass. and Hampshire County Deeds in Northampton, Mass.

20. Sheldon, *History*, II, 378.
21. *Ibid.*, I, 519–525. For a more complete discussion of the Belcher conference see George Sheldon, *The Conference at Deerfield, Mass., August 27–31, 1735, Between Gov. Belcher and Several Tribes of Western Indians* (Boston, 1906).
22. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. record of the Church of Deerfield, 1733–1780, property of the First Church of Deerfield. The title page reads, “Boston: may 1733 £16/ Given to the Church of Deerfield for its Records to be Continued with the Minister.” Hereafter cited as Jonathan Ashley, church record.
23. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 2009, May 1, 1752, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
24. Sylvester Judd, *History of Hadley, including the early History of Hatfield, South Hadley, Amherst and Granby, Massachusetts* (Northampton, 1863), p. 338; also James Russell Trumbull, *History of Northampton, Massachusetts, from its Settlement in 1654, 2 vols.* (Northampton, 1902), II, 199. Hereafter cited as Trumbull, *Northampton*.
25. Daniel White Wells and Reuben Field Wells, *A History of Hatfield, Massachusetts* (Springfield, 1910), p. 170.
26. For references to Jonathan Ashley in Suffield and Longmeadow see Rev. Ebenezer Gay, Ms. diary, transcript, “extracts from memoranda made at Suffield,” The Connecticut Historical Society.
27. Jonathan Ashley, *The United Endeavours and Earnest Prayers of Ministers and People, to promote the great Design of the Ministry* (Boston, 1742). Hereafter cited as *The United Endeavours*.
28. Jonathan Ashley, *The Great Duty of Charity, considered and applied in a Sermon, Preached at the Church in Brattle Street, Boston, on the Lord's-Day, November 28, 1742* (Boston, 1742).
29. Jonathan Edwards, *A Farewel-Sermon Preached at the first Precinct in Northampton After the People's publick Rejection of their Minister, and renouncing thier [sic] Relation to Him as Pastor of the Church there, On June 22, 1750, Occasioned by Differences of Sentiments Concerning the requisite Qualifications of Members of the Church in complete Standing* (Boston, 1751). A copy of this printed sermon is in the Ashley House.
30. Jonathan Ashley, *An humble Attempt to give a clear Account from Scripture, how the Jewish and Christian Churches were constituted, and what sort of Saintship is necessary in order to be a Communicant at the Lord's Table* (Boston, 1753).
31. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 556, March 28, 1737/8, The private collection of Henry N. Flynt. Items in this collection hereafter cited as Flynt.
32. Jonathan Ashley to the town of Deerfield, Ms. letter, December 9, 1745, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
33. Sheldon, *History*, I, 529.

34. Joseph Barnard, account book, May 1744, P.V.M.A.
35. *Ibid.*, June, 1746.
36. *Ibid.*, March 8, 1747/8.
37. Elijah Williams, day book, 1754, P.V.M.A.
38. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 2336, June 26, 1755, Flynt.
39. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 2372, October 12, 1755, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
40. A full account and analysis of the correspondence between Jonathan Ashley of Deerfield and Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Pe was written by Bruce McClellan in his manuscript, *Grapes and Thorns*, in a chapter entitled "Two Shepherds Contending," which was subsequently published separately in *The New England Quarterly*, XXVII, 455. The following four references are from this manuscript.
41. Jonathan Ashley to Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Pe, Ms. letter between August 16, 1747, and February 8, 1748, The Newbury Library, Chicago, Ill.
42. Jonathan Ashley to Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Pe, Ms. letter, February 25, 1749, Congregational Library of the American Congregational Association, Boston, Mass.
43. Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Pe to Jonathan Ashley, Ms. letter, between February 27, 1748, and April 15, 1748. Library of Congress.
44. Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Pe to Jonathan Ashley, Ms. letter, July 18, 1752, Congregational Library of the American Congregational Association, Boston, Mass.
45. Bruce McClellan, Ms. biography, *Grapes and Thorns*, p. 179.
46. Taylor, appendix, p. 184.
47. Samuel Barnard, Ms. will, written June 20, 1755, codicil January 21, 1762, probated December 27, 1762, Barnard Papers, P.V.M.A. The bequest of the 400 acres is worded, "For the use & Benifit of an Academy which is proposed to be set up & indow'd in the Town of Hadley or some other town in the County of Hampshire . . ." If the academy were not endowed and a "learned Orthodox Rector" settled by January 15, 1764, the proceeds from the land were to be used "to incourage & bring forward Conversion of our heathen Neighbors, to the faith of our Protestant Churches. . ." The word "proposed" is highly significant for it proves that the establishment of an academy was no new thought to Barnard or to Ephraim Williams who left funds for education in this same year of 1755.
48. Ephraim Williams, will, written July 22, 1755, probated December 10, 1755, Hampshire County Registry of Probate, Northampton, Mass., Book 8, 146. Hereafter cited as Hampshire County Probate. Probate records until 1812, when Hampshire County was divided into Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties, are kept at the Hampshire County Registry of Probate, Northampton, Mass. After 1812 Hampshire County Probate Records continued to be kept at Northampton, Franklin County Probate Records are in Greenfield, Mass. and Hampden County Probate Records are in Springfield, Mass.

49. Ephraim Williams left his homestead at Stockbridge, Mass., to his brothers, Elijah and Josiah, but if they should both die without issue, the estate was to be sold, the money invested and the interest used, "For some pious or Charitable purposes, as the propogating Christianity the Support of the Poor in the County of Hampshire, or for Schools on the Frontiers in the County afores<sup>d</sup>. . . ." By specifying Hampshire County it might seem that Ephraim had in mind education in towns in the Connecticut Valley; this is not the case since until July 1, 1761 when Berkshire County was incorporated, lands in the western part of Massachusetts belonged to Hampshire County.

50. Dwight Whitney Marsh, *Marsh Genealogy, Giving Several Thousand Descendants of John Marsh of Hartford, Ct. 1636-1895* (Amherst, 1895). On page 403 the author tells of a tradition in the Marsh family which says that Ephraim Williams sought the hand of Sarah Williams, a daughter of Colonel Israel Williams, but that Sarah preferred Doctor Perez Marsh, whom she later married about 1759. Colonel Ephraim, "offered to make his will giving all his property to her before starting for Lake George" but she still refused his offers. Credibility is given to this tradition by the fact that Eunice, Jerusha, Lucretia and Elizabeth Williams, sisters of Sarah, received small legacies in the will of Ephraim Williams, but Sarah's name is conspicuously absent.

51. Jonathan Ashley to Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, Ms. letter, January 29, 1763, Library of Congress. In his final attempts to secure a charter for Queens College, Jonathan Ashley refers to the immediacy of establishing the college, lest the Barnard grant be forfeited according to the terms of the will, which stipulated that the Academy must be established by January 15, 1764. Here is conclusive proof not only that the funds from Barnard's 400 acre grant were available for Queens College but also that Queens College was an out-growth of the former "proposed" Academy in Hadley.

52. H. Lefavour, "The Proposed College in Hampshire County in 1762," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston, 1942), LXVI, 63.

53. *Ibid.*, 70.

54. Quoted in Ms. letter, E. Smith to I. Williams, September 28, 1764, Library of Congress.

55. Joseph Barnard, the residuary legatee of Samuel Barnard, sold this land in several parcels during the next twenty years. Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield.

56. Elihu Ashley, Ms. diary, October 3, 1774, P.V.M.A. Hereafter cited as Elihu Ashley, diary.

57. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1774.

58. *Ibid.*, June 11, 1773.

59. Jonathan Ashley, letter to the town of Deerfield, quoted in Sheldon, *History*, I, 539.

60. Jonathan Ashley, account book, P.V.M.A.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. record of expenses, 1751, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.

63. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. receipt from David Crosbey, April 30, 1753, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
64. Jonathan Ashley, account book, February 11, 1752.
65. *Ibid.*, August, 1753.
66. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 2202, March 17, 1754, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.
67. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 2670, August 27, 1758, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
68. Jonathan Ashley, church record, "Names of persons offending & their acknowledgements Recorded."
69. Jonathan Ashley, *The United Endeavours*, p. 15.
70. Rodolphus Dickinson, *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical view of the Town of Deerfield in the County of Franklin and State of Massachusetts* (Deerfield, 1815), p. 20.
71. Packard, *History*, p. 130.
72. Moses Chandler, Tythingman, to Thomas Williams, Justice of the Peace, Ms. complaint, March 4, 1774, P.V.M.A.
73. Aaron Scott, Ms. complaint against Edward Joiner, March 16, 1774, P.V.M.A.
74. Jonathan Ashley, church record, January 10, 1742/3.
75. *Ibid.*, December 25, 1774.
76. Packard, *History*, pp. 129-30. For the precedent for this action taken against card playing, see Jonathan Ashley, church record, January 10, 1742/3, where a vote was passed and recorded that ". . . the playing at Cards be . . . offensive to this Chh Since it is attended with So many Evil Consequences. . . ."
77. Jonathan Ashley, church record, *passim*.
78. E. H. Gillett, "Rev. John [sic] Ashley of Deerfield," *The Historical Magazine*. . . , I, no. 3 (March, 1867), 142.
79. Thomas Drowne to David Field, Ms. bill, March 2, 1768, P.V.M.A.
80. Town of Deerfield, Mass. records of repairs on the meeting house, 1768-1769, P.V.M.A.
81. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. sermon no. 2336, June 26, 1755, Flynt.
82. Town of Deerfield, Ms. vote to support Independence, June 25, 1775, P.V.M.A.
83. Jonathan Ashley, account book, December 13, 1759-February 8, 1760.
84. Samuel Williams to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, January 27, 1775, P.V.M.A.
85. Elihu Ashley, diary, August 24, 1774.
86. *Ibid.*, January 4, 1775.
87. *Ibid.*, September 1, 1774.
88. *Ibid.*, September 2, 1774.
89. *Ibid.*, November 3, 1774.
90. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1774.
91. Betsey Ashley to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, January 17, 1775, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
92. Elihu Ashley, diary, June 13, 1775.

93. Sheldon, *History*, II, 743.
94. D. Willard, *History of Greenfield* (Greenfield, 1838), pp. 61-62.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
96. Sheldon, *History*, II 694.
97. Anonymous Ms. letter to the "Church of Christ in Deerfield, May 25, 1780," P.V.M.A.
98. Taylor, appendix, p. 215.

### CHAPTER 3. THE PARSON'S SONS:

#### THE SQUIRE, A MIGHT HAVE BEEN, JONATHAN ASHLEY, JR., 1739-1787

1. Jonathan Ashley, Esq. to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, undated, internal evidence points to 1769, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
2. Sheldon, *History*, II, 853.
3. Jonathan Ashley, Esq. to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, November 6, 1769, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
4. Samuel Hinsdale to Jonathan Ashley, Esq., deed to a homelot in Deerfield, May 20, 1771, Franklin County Registry of Deeds, Greenfield, Mass., Book 2, 87. Hereafter cited as Franklin County Deeds.
5. Elihu Ashley, diary, November 19, 1774.
6. For an account of this attack on the County Court see Trumbull, *Northampton*, II, 345-348.
7. Elihu Ashley, diary, August 31, 1774.
8. Sheldon, *History*, II, 745.
9. Seth Catlin, Jonathan Ashley, John Williams to John Hancock, petition for release from Suffolk County Jail, March 23, 1781, quoted in Sheldon, *History*, II, 743-744.
10. Sheldon, *History*, II, 745.
11. Jason Cady to Jonathan Ashley, deed to a farm in Shelburne, Mass., October 21, 1782, Franklin County Deeds, Book 3, 293.
12. Elihu Ashley, ledger, May 31, P.V.M.A.

### THE ARTISAN, SOLOMON ASHLEY, A PARENTHESIS, 1754-1823

1. Sheldon, *History*, II, 48.
2. Hampshire County Probate, 1760-1823; and Franklin County Probate Records, Greenfield, Mass., 1812-1823. Hereafter cited as Franklin County Probate.
3. Solomon Ashley, sale of land in Leyden, Mass., November 10, 1784, Hampshire County Deeds, Book 23, 152.
4. Several years frequently elapsed between a death and the purchase of a grave-stone for the deceased. Thus the date of death inscribed on a stone is not a

valid means of dating the carving of the stone itself. In the case of the seven coffin stones listed below, although the dates of death range from 1777-1788, it is probable that they were all carved about 1788.

1. Elijah, son of Abner Smead, died September 1, 1777, age 3, Greenfield.
2. Nancy, daughter of Elihu Ashley, died January 6, 1779, age 6 months, Deerfield.
3. Elizabeth Matilda, daughter of Jonathan Ashley, Esq., died May 19, 1780, age 3 weeks, Deerfield.
4. Jonathan, son of William Williams and Dorothy Ashley Williams, died February 27, 1781, age 6 months, Deerfield.
5. —, stillborn child of Abner Smead, died December 14, 1783, Greenfield.
6. Mary, wife of Simeon Harvey, died December 20, 1785, age 39, and stillborn infant, Deerfield.
7. Roxanny, daughter of Abner Smead, died July 25, 1788, age 6 months, Greenfield.
5. The slate stones of Samuel Hinsdale of Greenfield and Joseph Smith of Hatfield are nearly identical examples of the type described. John Locke was paid for the stone of Samuel Hinsdale in February, 1788. (Hampshire County Probate, Book 15, 383). Solomon Ashley was paid for that of Joseph Smith in 1799. (Hampshire County Probate, Book 20, 278).
6. Elijah Phelps to Solomon Ashley, Ms. bill, November 26, 1787, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
7. Judge Oliver Seymour Phelps & Andrew T. Servin, *The Phelps Family of America* (Pittsfield, 1899), p. 298.
8. The two stones for which John Locke was paid were for Mary, first wife of Obadiah Dickinson, who died in 1747, and Martha, second wife of Obadiah Dickinson, who died in 1785. Solomon Ashley was paid for the stone of Deacon Obadiah Dickinson, who died in 1788. For the accounts for these three stones see Hampshire County Probate, Box 48, No. 32.
9. For a good example of this style of John Locke, see the stone of Abigail Silliman in Hinsdale, New Hampshire, the documentation for which is found in a Ms. account, John Williams to John Locke, 1790-1791, Williams Papers, P.V.M.A.
10. The following stones are good examples of Solomon's stylized likenesses:
  - Colonel Josiah Allis, Whately, Mass., died 1794.
  - Captain Nathan Frary, South Deerfield, Mass., died 1794.
  - Salah Barnard, Deerfield, Mass., died 1795.
  - Giles C. Kellogg, Hadley, Mass., died 1796.
  - Lt. Simeon Cooley, Sunderland, Mass., died 1797.
  - Joseph Stebbins, Deerfield, Mass., died 1797.
  - Abner Smead, Greenfield, Mass., died 1797.
  - Seth Catlin, Deerfield, Mass., died 1798.
  - David Morton, Hatfield, Mass., died 1798.

Seth Bardwell, Hatfield, Mass., died 1795.

David Sexton, Deerfield, Mass., died 1800.

11. Harriette M. Forbes, "Early New England Gravestones and The Men Who Made Them," *Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association*, VII (1925), 342. Hereafter cited as *P.V.M.A. Proceedings*.
12. Elihu Ashley, Ms. accounts to the estate of Esther Williams, November 9 and December 4, 1800, Williams Papers, P.V.M.A.
13. Solomon Ashley vs. Edward Ruggles of Montague, Mass., Ms. writ for \$12.00 for a pair of gravestones unpaid, for his mother Mrs. Ann Ruggles, August 25, 1810, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
14. Sheldon, *History*, I, 616, says that Solomon Ashley had a shop on houselot 24 about 1800 for cutting gravestones. This statement has not been substantiated in land records or other documents. On page 627 Sheldon says that Solomon Ashley lived on houselot 43 in 1801 and there made pottery and gravestones. Verification for the fact that Solomon was living on the north part of lot 43 in 1801 can be found in Franklin County Deeds, Book 19, 55, where a sale of the former homelot of Jonathan Ashley, Jr. from Asa Stebbins to William Dennison on February 24, 1801, describes the northwest boundary as land ". . . now Occupied by Sol<sup>o</sup> Ashley. . . ." Again in 1804, Book 19, 345, when William Dennison transferred the same lot back to Asa Stebbins on April 30, 1804, Solomon Ashley is an abuttor. No reference has been found, however, to authenticate the fact that he was then occupied in the trade of pottery maker on this lot.
15. Cephas Childs to the Selectmen of Deerfield, Ms. petition for aid in the support of Solomon Ashley, September 17, 1819, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.

#### THE DOCTOR, ELIHU ASHLEY, 1750-1817

1. In his diary Elihu Ashley gives the date of his birth as July 11, but his father's church record gives it as August 12. The latter date is probably the day on which Elihu was baptized.
2. The graduation certificate of Elihu Ashley from Hatfield Academy is in the Library of Congress and is dated, August 24, 1768. It states, "We judge his acquirements to be such as will recommend him to the honours of learning, and to the public improvement of mankind in the learned professions."
3. Elihu's previous acquaintance with Nathan Tisdale is apparent when, during a visit to Lebanon, Conn., he wrote in his diary on May 21, 1774, "walked up to see Mr. Tisdale found him very ill with a Total Relaxation."
4. Jonathan Ashley, Esq. to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, November 6, 1769, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
5. William Williams to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, May 25, 1772, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
6. References to the life and times 1773-1775, not specifically noted are from the diary of Elihu Ashley in passing.

7. Elihu Ashley to Polly Williams, Ms. letter of invitation, August 25, 1772, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
8. Elihu Ashley, diary, May 26, 1773.
9. Hepzibah Dickinson to Polly Williams, Ms. letter, May 1, 1773, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
10. Elihu Ashley, diary, May 26, 1773.
11. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1774.
12. *Ibid.*, June 23, 1774.
13. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1774.
14. *Ibid.*, August 7, 1774.
15. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1774.
16. Elihu Ashley to Patty Williams, Ms. letter, July 31, 1774, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
17. Elihu Ashley, diary, April 7, 1775.
18. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1774.
19. *Ibid.*, December 13, 1774.
20. *Ibid.*, December 14, 1774.
21. *Ibid.*, September 3, 1775.
22. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1775.
23. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1775.
24. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1775.
25. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1775.
26. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1775.
27. Jonathan Ashley, will, June 16, 1780, Hampshire County Probate, Book 13, 340.
28. Sheldon, *History*, II, 842-843.

#### CHAPTER 4. THE FARM:

LORD NORTH, THOMAS WILLIAMS ASHLEY, 1776-1848

1. Cynthia Leffingwell to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, January 4, 1786, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
2. George Sheldon, Ms. notebook, "Things to be Remembered about Deerfield and Vicinity," dictated to his wife, J. M. Arms Sheldon, March 16, 1913, P.V.M.A. Hereafter cited as Sheldon, notebook.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Elihu Ashley, will, probated May 23, 1817, Franklin County Probate. Hereafter cited as Elihu Ashley, will.
5. Ms. list of commissions in War of 1812, April 7, 1813, P.V.M.A.
6. Sheldon, *History*, II, 49.
7. Sheldon, notebook.
8. Elihu Ashley, will.
9. Consider Dickinson, Ms. testimony, February 4, 1822, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.

10. Sheldon, *History*, II, 913.
11. Deerfield town records, minutes of meeting February 17, 1823, P.V.M.A. It was voted at this meeting "... to build a meeting house provided a sufficient sum for that purpose can be raised by subscription . . . the subscribers are to have the benefit by sale or otherwise of the materials of the old meeting-house. . . ."
12. Sheldon, *History*, II, 876.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Thomas W. Ashley to The Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, mortgage, April 24, 1824, for \$1,200, Franklin County Deeds, Book 56, 134.
15. Thomas W. Ashley to The Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, mortgage, December 6, 1830, for \$3,100, Franklin County Deeds, Book 72, 170.
16. Thomas W. Ashley to Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., mortgage, December 15, 1841, for \$1,200, Franklin County Deeds, Book 116, 350.
17. Thomas W. Ashley to Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., deed, April 29, 1843, for \$400 and "the Payment of the within described Mortgages," Franklin County Deeds, Book 121, 215.
18. Thomas W. Ashley and Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., Ms. agreement for a one year lease of the Ashley farm and the right to re-purchase if previous mortgages paid within the year, April 29, 1843, privately owned by Amelia F. Miller. Items in this collection hereafter cited as Miller.
19. *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, Tuesday, October 3, 1843. In the full account of the fire it was stated, "We were not able to learn from any one present at the fire, how it took." However, in the same newspaper on October 24, 1843, the selectmen of Deerfield offered a \$50. reward for information concerning the cause of the fire, claiming that, ". . . Suspicion has arisen, that the buildings which were destroyed by fire in Deerfield . . . was the work of some evil disposed person or persons, . . . ." Apparently no one could offer sufficient information to claim the reward for there appears no additional notice of the possible culprit.
20. Sheldon, notebook.
21. Petition for the relief of Thomas W. Ashley, February 29, 1844, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
22. Thomas W. Ashley and Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., Ms. agreement for an additional one year lease of the Ashley farm, March 9, 1844, Miller.
23. Thomas W. Ashley and Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., Ms. agreements for an additional one year lease of the Ashley farm, April 1, 1845, April 1, 1846, April 1, 1847, Miller.
24. Trowbridge, *Ashley*, p. 135.
25. Jonathan Porter Ashley, "An Ashley Genealogy," *P.V.M.A. Proceedings*, VII (1924), 278. The author also mentions a letter, the present location of which cannot be discovered, from Thomas Ashley, Jr. to his uncle, Robert Ashley of Lyons, N.Y., which cites pneumonia as the cause of his father's death.

## UNCLE JOHN, JONATHAN ASHLEY, 1816-1895

1. Thomas W. Ashley, inventory, March 2, 1848, Franklin County Probate.
2. Sheldon, notebook.
3. Thomas Williams Ashley, Jr., "A Common Memorandum," journal from December 1, 1847, to September 14, 1856, quoted by Jean Campbell in "Ashley House Research," ca. 1945. Mr. Jonathan Porter Ashley owned this journal at the time of his death in 1948, but at present his widow is unable to locate it. No other reference to Ely and Day in this connection can be found.
4. Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., Ms. personal note accounting the Ashley land transaction, May 12, 1849, Miller. See also Franklin County Deeds, Book 156, 16 for the recorded deed.
5. Thomas Williams Ashley, Jr., "A Common Memorandum," April 1, 1848, as quoted by Jean Campbell.
6. Isaac Abercrombie, Jr., Ms. statement of discharge of mortgage, April 5, 1861, Miller.
7. Mehitable Stebbins Clesson of Shelbyville, Ill. to Dennis Stebbins of Deerfield, Mass., Ms. letter, September 20, 1841, Stebbins Papers, P.V.M.A.
8. Thomas Ashley to Jonathan Ashley, deed, March 23, 1854, Franklin County Deeds, Book 185, 89.
9. Trowbridge, *Ashley*, p. 185.
10. *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, May 24, 1869.
11. Elbert Amidon to Jonathan Ashley, deed, May 2, 1868, Franklin County Deeds, Book 268, 162. The land which Jonathan Ashley bought was 1/2 acre to the rear of his homelot onto which he moved the old house sometime before May 24, 1869 when the newspaper reported the building of his new house.
12. Deerfield town records, dedication of the Civil War monument, September 4, 1869, P.V.M.A.
13. *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, September 14, 1895.
14. *Ibid.*

## THE REPRESENTATIVE, CHARLES HART ASHLEY, 1860-1925

1. All general information concerning Charles Hart Ashley comes from an interview with his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Esther Ashley, 1961.
2. *Greenfield Daily Recorder*, obituary of Charles Hart Ashley, August 11, 1925.
3. *Ibid.*
4. In 1921 Charles H. Ashley built a modern bungalow on the south part of his homelot. For this date see Jean Campbell, "Ashley House Research." On March 10, 1922, he deeded the bungalow and the land on which it stood, 147.75' by 88' to his wife, Gertrude Porter Ashley. (Franklin County Deeds, Book 685, 38.) Gertrude Porter Ashley left the house and land to her daugh-

ters, Mildred P. Ashley and Natalie Ashley Stebbins by will in 1936. (Franklin County Probate, will filed March 30, 1936.) On July 10, 1946, the heirs of Gertrude Porter Ashley sold the bungalow and land to Henry N. Flynt, by whom it was torn down. (Franklin County Deeds, Book 889, 343.)

5. *Greenfield Daily Recorder*, obituary of Charles Hart Ashley, August 11, 1925.
6. Charles Hart Ashley, will and inventory, 1925, Franklin County Probate.

#### THE SCHOOL TEACHER, THOMAS WILLIAMS ASHLEY, 1894-1918

1. The Deerfield Academy Alumni Office has kindly made available its file on Tom Ashley, from which most of the following information was taken.  
For other general sources about Tom Ashley see:  
*Greenfield Daily Recorder*, July 24, 1918.
2. J. M. Arms Sheldon, "The Supreme Sacrifice," *P.V.M.A. Proceedings*, VI (1919), 520-524.
3. Jonathan Porter Ashley, "An Ashley Genealogy," *P.V.M.A. Proceedings*, VII (1924), 283-288.
4. Tom Ashley, "Memorandum Book, 1906-1909," Deerfield Academy Alumni Office.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Tom Ashley, "A Complete record of the Athletics of the Dickinson Academy and Deerfield High School . . .," Deerfield Academy Alumni Office.
7. Tom Ashley, "Catalogue of Deerfield Academy and Dickinson High School, 1916-1917," Ms. notebook, Deerfield Academy Alumni Office.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*

#### THE HISTORIAN, JONATHAN PORTER ASHLEY, 1890-1948

1. Jonathan Porter Ashley, "An Ashley Genealogy," *P.V.M.A. Proceedings*, VII (1924), 260.
2. Jonathan Porter Ashley, "The Old World Pasture," *Annual of the P.V.M.A.* (1940), 99.
3. In 1773 Parson Ashley purchased for £ 35 Lot 4 in what was then called Deerfield Northwest Division and is now West Deerfield. The lot consisted of 104 acres. For this conveyance see Franklin County Deeds, Abstracts of Hampshire County Deeds, Book 4, 330.
4. Jonathan Porter Ashley, "An Ashley Genealogy," p. 274.
5. For recent conveyances of the Ashley homestead see Franklin County Deeds. Jonathan Ashley mortgage of the entire farm with the exception of the bungalow and the land on which it stood to the Federal Land Bank, December 27, 1934, Book 805, 318. Transfer of the mortgage from the Federal Land Bank to Frank L. Boyden, May 1, 1944, Book 887, 63. Frank L. Boyden to Henry N. Flynt, October 21, 1946, Book 900, 254. The date 1945 is given

for the sale of the farm by Jonathan P. Ashley in the text because until that year he continued to live on the homelot and because although the deed to Henry N. Flynt was not recorded until October 21, 1946, the agreement was reached in 1945 and in that year work was begun on the restoration.

## CHAPTER 5. THE FIRST HOUSE

1. Don Gleason Hill, ed., *Dedham Town Records, 1659-1673* (Dedham, 1894), p. 192.
2. John Pynchon to Thomas Wells, deed, July 4, 1692, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book A, 121.
3. Sheldon, *History*, II, 356.
4. *Ibid.*, I, 213.
5. John Pynchon to Thomas Wells, deed, July 4, 1692, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book A, 121.
6. Thomas Wells, inventory of estate, August 1, 1691, Hampshire County Probate, Box 157, No. 28.
7. Stephen Williams, Ms. story of Wells and Broughton attack, February 1, 1731/2, Williams Papers, P.V.M.A.
8. Stephen Williams, "Names of those persons who were taken captive at Deerfield, Feb. 29, 1703/4," appendix to John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive*, 6th edition with additions (Greenfield, 1800), p. 149.
9. Fitz-John Winthrop, table of losses, Massachusetts Historical Society, published in Sheldon, *History*, I, 304-305.
10. Taylor, appendix, p. 207.
11. Joseph Morton et al. to Thomas Wells and Samuel Barnard, deed, March 6, 1708/9, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book D, 442.
12. Lieut. Thomas Wells to Thomas Wells, Cordwainer, deed, January 1, 1719/20, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book C, 555.
13. Thomas Wells, Cordwainer, to Moses Nash of Hadley, Blacksmith, deed, May 13, 1721, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book D, 155.
14. Francis Borland of Boston, Merchant, agent for his father Mr. John Borland of Boston, Merchant, now of London, to Thomas Wells, Jr. of Deerfield, Cordwainer, deed to a homelot obtained in execution against Hannah Stebbins, April 13, 1721, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book D, 3.
15. Moses Nash to John Wells, deed, May 2, 1726, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book D, 600. Evidence for the statement that Moses Nash moved to Hartford can be found in a deed March 24, 1726/7, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book E, 131.
16. Thomas Wells, Yeoman, to his "loving cousin John Wells," deed, 1732, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book 6, 254.
17. John Wells, Husbandman, to Jonathan Ashley, deed, June 28, 1733, Hampshire County Deeds, Springfield, Book W, 447.

## PARSON ASHLEY'S HOUSE

1. Jonathan Ashley's account book consists of accounts that are part day book and part ledger with many extraneous notes interspersed. Often his credits are recorded with no mention of the goods or service received.
2. Account books kept by Deerfield merchants who were contemporaries of Jonathan Ashley make it possible to cross reference and thereby clarify many of his purchases that are unspecified in his own book.
3. Jonathan Ashley, account book, October, 1759, Sharp Caleb, "Credit to 4 days framing Corn house"; John Taylor, "Octob. 1759 Credit to 2 days work at Corn house"; Jonathan Taylor, "1759 . . . Oct to 3 days working at a frame. . . ." Although the last credit cited to Jonathan Taylor does not specify the particular sort of frame at which he was working, it is perfectly clear from the dates of the Sharp Caleb and John Taylor credits that Jonathan Taylor was also working on the frame of the corn house.
4. For notes, charts and general reminiscences I am indebted to Mr. Gillett Griffin, who as a student of Deerfield Academy 1944-48, explored the tobacco barn and made valuable records which he has made available for this work. Hereafter cited as Griffin, notes.
5. The MacClafin House of Wenham, Mass., dates to the 1660's. The Trumbull House of Lebanon, Conn., dates to the 1740's. Both of these have plank frames. Several houses in Goshen, New Hampshire, were constructed with plank frames in the 1850's, according to Mr. Walter R. Nelson of that town.
6. Sheldon, notebook.
7. This carpenter was Mr. F. Newton Allen of Greenfield, Mass.
8. This partition can be seen through the open door in the front view photograph taken of the Ashley House ca. 1912 by the Allen sisters.
9. The use of the gambrel roof, for a house of the size and proportion of the Ashley House, does not appear in the Connecticut Valley much before 1740 at the earliest. If by some chance John Wells had built such a house during his ownership, 1726-1733, it is safe to say that he must have done so after 1729, and moreover, that no gambrel roofed house stood in Deerfield in 1729. In this year a Harvard student, Dudley Woodbridge, who took a trip to the western part of the province, made sketches of the houses and meeting houses in Deerfield. Fourteen houses in Deerfield were sketched, as well as the old meeting house and the new one then being built. Although none of the houses were identified in the drawing, not one of them had a gambrel roof. If anything so unusual as a gambrel roofed house had been standing in Deerfield at this time it surely would have caught Woodbridge's attention. Dr. Abbott L. Cummings, Assistant Director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and Mr. Stephen Racz, who has long worked with Connecticut houses, agree on the 1740 date.
10. Four years' research on the subject of pedimented doorways in the Connecticut Valley has failed to find documentary evidence to indicate that any such

doorway was constructed in this region before 1750. In cases where such an elaborate frontispiece can now be found on a house known to have been built in the early eighteenth century, records show that it was added at some later time.

11. Concerning the house of Dr. Thomas Williams, which at present has a pitched roof and which can be dated about 1755 from account books, the Sheldon notebook states that its roof was originally a gambrel, a situation which reverses what happened to the Ashley House but which proves that it was not unprecedented to alter the style of a roof.
12. George Sheldon to William Sumner Appleton, Ms. copy of a letter, summer 1912, P.V.M.A. This letter says that the John Williams House, Dr. Thomas Williams House and Thomas Dickinson House, all of Deerfield, once had center chimneys which have since been replaced by two side chimneys.
13. Samuel Barnard, account book, October, 1733, P.V.M.A.
14. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. account of expenses, 1751, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
15. William Williams, ledger, Smith College Library, Northampton, Mass. The following credits appear for the year 1752: November 17, "The Rev<sup>d</sup> Jonathan Ashley Dr to 1 Mill: Bricks £6:2:6"; December 26, "The Rev<sup>d</sup> Jonathan Ashley D<sup>r</sup> To 3ct of Weather Bricks at 15£ 2:5—."
16. Jonathan Ashley, account book, June 12, 1753, "paid Coach for work 2-12-6"; June 23, 1753, "paid Aaron Scot for work 6-0-0."
17. *Ibid.*, September, 1754, "Credit John Catlin . . . to mending roof 8s . . . to laying floor 12/6."
18. Elijah Williams, day book, P.V.M.A.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Jonathan Ashley, account book, "Nims John Credit 1757 to Shingles . . . 734."
21. Elijah Williams, day book.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Elihu Ashley, notes on back page of Jonathan Ashley's "Mathematical Exercise Book," P.V.M.A.
24. *Ibid.*
25. A complete discussion of the ell is found in the section following.
26. Sheldon, notebook.
27. Sheldon, *History*, II, 896. Telling of the slave, Cato, who used to sit by the open fire, Sheldon says that before Cato died in 1825, Col. T. W. Ashley had substituted a cooking stove for the fireplace, being one of the first in Deerfield to do so.
28. Griffin, notes

## THE ASHLEYS' HOUSE

1. Restoration of the Ashley House had been the unrealized dream of Jonathan Porter Ashley and long the hope of Mrs. Frank L. Boyden, but Mr. and Mrs. Henry N. Flynt were the first to think of such a plan in realistic terms.
2. *Greenfield Recorder-Gazette*, September 18, 1945.

3. Mr. William Croteau of Holyoke, Mass. was in charge of moving both of the houses. Mr. William E. Gass of South Deerfield, Mass. was the contractor in charge of the restoration. Mr. E. P. Chevalier of Greenfield, Mass. was the painting contractor. Mr. Wayland Brown of Greenfield, Mass. was the head painter. Miss Jean Campbell did research work at the time of the restoration.
4. A list of those interviewed by Miss Jean Campbell is available in the files of the Heritage Foundation, Deerfield, Mass.
5. In 1921 Mr. William Bullitt bought a panelled wall from the Ashley House, which was then being used for tobacco storage, and had it installed in his summer home in Ashfield, Mass., where it has remained. He remembers riding up to the barn on horseback and seeing farm hands nailing tobacco to the panelling. He tried to buy more of the panelling at this time but was told that it would be too much trouble to remove it.
6. Three of Charles Ashley's children were alive at the time of the restoration: Jonathan Porter Ashley, Natalie Ashley Stebbins and Mildred Ashley.
7. Jean Campbell, "Ashley House Research," says that Natalie Ashley Stebbins believed the original doors were owned by Frederick Ashley's married daughter in Westport, Conn. Mr. Henry N. Flynt says that he was unable to locate the doors through this source.
8. Charissa Ashley to Elihu Ashley, Ms. letter, July 12, 1775, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A.
9. Cynthia Leffingwell to Polly Ashley, Ms. letter, November 8, 1800, Williams Papers, P.V.M.A.
10. Griffin, notes.
11. See the side view of the Ashley House taken about 1912 by the Allen sisters. An interior window shutter which had disappeared by 1945 can be seen in the gable window.
12. See Gillett Griffin's illustration of this door.
13. The account book of Nathaniel Phelps of Northampton, a mason, is now in the P.V.M.A. library and shows that tiles were used for hearths in this area in the 1740's.
14. Mrs. Esther Ashley, widow of Jonathan Porter Ashley, recalls that her father-in-law, Charles Ashley, told her that his uncle, Jonathan Ashley, sold stones to Mr. William Bullitt for his home in Ashfield, Mass. However, Mr. Bullitt claims that he bought no such stones.
15. Reproductions of Ashley House wallpaper and other papers found in Deerfield houses are obtainable at the Hall Tavern, Deerfield, Mass.
16. Sheldon, notebook. Sheldon states, "stairs on right as you enter back of hall."
17. An example of a gun niche can be seen in the Frary House, Deerfield, Mass.
18. Jean Campbell, "Chronological Record of the House and Barn Buildings To Date," undated report, probably 1945, files of the Heritage Foundation. While interviewing Mrs. Natalie Ashley Stebbins, Miss Campbell was told that the corner cupboard had once been "pinkish."

19. One of these bofats is still in the north room of the Thomas Dickinson House; the other, once in the house of Major Elijah Williams, otherwise known as the "John Williams House," is now in the collection of the P.V.M.A.
20. From the ledger of Justin Hitchcock in the library of the P.V.M.A. it is possible to date the building of his house, now standing on Albany Road, Deerfield, Mass., as 1778-79. Personal observations of the author in the summer of 1961, at which time the house was extensively repaired, reveal split laths in all of the rooms. This is the earliest documented record of split laths in Deerfield.
21. It is thought that the panelling heretofore mentioned which was taken from the house in 1921 by Mr. William Bullitt may have come from the upstairs hall, although Mr. Bullitt is unable to recall its location.
22. Jean Campbell, "Construction Features of the Ashley House When it Was First Built Around 1730," files of the Heritage Foundation.
23. *Ibid.*
24. The Sargeant House in Stockbridge, Mass., has such an arrangement.
25. Sheldon, notebook. Concerning the Thomas Dickinson House, Sheldon said, "they had bees in the garrett & made holes through the wall for them to go in. . . ."
26. Sheldon in his notes says that the houses of Dr. Thomas Williams, called by him the Billings House and more familiarly known as that today, and Parson Ashley's house were practically alike. "In the Billings house & Ashley H there was a lean-to on the North west Corner & no other room." Although the Thomas Williams (Billings) House now has a leanto which follows the slope of the roof in the manner of a "saltbox," a photograph taken about 1912, the same period as the Sheldon notes, shows that it was formerly only a one-story leanto and began midway down the back side of the house. Accordingly then the Ashley leanto was also of this smaller, one-story type. In the absence of certain knowledge, the height of the reconstructed leanto was increased to follow the slope of the roof of the main house thereby providing space for bathroom and storage facilities.
27. Elihu Ashley, ledger, P.V.M.A. In 1781 Ezra Mudge was credited, "By making ye Door into ye Kitchen & making ye Partition 9/o." This alteration allowed the main hall to extend through the entire house as it did according to Sheldon's notes. See floor plan showing alterations made by Elihu Ashley.
28. In later years there was a fire in the old kitchen, which was then used as a bedroom, and Thomas Williams Ashley wrote of patching the west bedroom floor "charred out" in his journal, "A Common Memorandum" in 1847.
29. Sheldon, notebook. The fact that the old leanto kitchen was a bedroom in the nineteenth century is indicated by Sheldon's statement, "as you enter back of hall door to bed room on left hand." A deed from Elihu Ashley to his son, Thomas Williams Ashley, August 7, 1810, (Franklin County Deeds, Book 36, 711), shows that the kitchen was clearly separate from the main house

by 1810 and also that the old kitchen in the leanto was then used as a bedroom. The deed mentions three rooms on the north side of the house, "north room, north chamber and Bed Room," and later refers to "the Kitchen part of the house."

30. Cynthia Leffingwell to Polly Ashley, Ms. letter, August 6, 1800, Williams Papers, P.V.M.A.
31. Sheldon, notebook. Although the Dr. Thomas Williams (Billings) ell is drastically altered on the interior, the outside retains its original lines.
32. Sheldon, notebook.
33. "Map of the Town of Deerfield, Franklin Co. Mass. from actual surveys by Benj. A. Clark D. E. Published by Richard Clark, 155 Wharton Str. Philadelphia, 1855."
34. Jonathan Ashley, Ms. warrant for inventory, November 17, 1780, Ashley Papers, P.V.M.A. In spite of this warrant no such inventory appears on file in the Hampshire County Probate Records.
35. Thomas Williams Ashley, inventory, March 2, 1848, Franklin County Probate.
36. *Ibid.*
37. For an account of the opening of the Ashley House see the *Greenfield Recorder-Gazette*, May 5, 1948.



## Bibliography



Particular attention should be given to three sources of information concerning the Ashley family and the Ashley House.

The manuscript biography of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, *Grapes and Thorns*, by Mr. Bruce McClellan of Lawrenceville, New Jersey, gives a thorough and lengthy account of the theological aspects of the minister's life and of eighteenth century religion in the Connecticut Valley. It is suggested that not only the text but also the bibliography of this work be consulted.

Since documentary sources have provided most of the material dealing with the later generations of the Ashley family, the importance of the manuscript library of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association cannot be overemphasized. This collection includes account books, letters, receipts, writs and original deeds catalogued under family headings, as well as fragments of Deerfield town records and diverse papers from neighboring towns. In addition, the manuscript library contains the personal correspondence and writings of George Sheldon, the nineteenth century historian, who was largely responsible for preserving the greatest part of the collection and whose *History of Deerfield* has been invaluable in the present work. As in the notes, manuscripts in this collection will be cited as P.V.M.A. in the bibliography.

Lastly, the Heritage Foundation has planned a permanent file concerning the Ashleys and their house which will be comprised of notes taken in 1945 by Jean Campbell during the restoration of the house and notes gathered during research work for this book.

This bibliography includes:

1. A complete list of published works by the Reverend Jonathan Ashley.
2. Manuscripts cited.
3. Public records consulted.
4. Printed works cited.

1. A complete list of published works by the Reverend Jonathan Ashley.

*The United Endeavours and earnest Prayers of Ministers and People, to promote the great Design of the Ministry. Recommended in a Sermon preach'd at Deerfield, Nov. 25, 1741. Upon the gathering a Church for Fall-town, and the ordination of Mr. John Norton a Pastor of the Church there . . . To which is added, The Charge given by the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Doolittle. And a Right Hand of fellowship, by the Reverend Mr. Joseph Ashley. Boston, 1742.*

*The Great Duty of Charity, considered and applied, in a Sermon Preached at the Church in Brattle-street, Boston, on the Lord's-day, November 28, 1742. Boston, 1742.*

*The Great concern of Christ for the Salvation of sinners, and the duty of his ministers earnestly to persuade men into his Kingdom: considered in a sermon preach'd at New Salem December 15, 1742. On Occasion of the gathering of a*

*church there, and the ordination of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Kendall, to be their pastor. Boston, 1743.*

*A letter from the Reverend Mr. Jonathan Ashley, to the Reverend Mr. William Cooper. In answer to his objections to Mr. Ashley's Sermon; as published in the Boston Gazette, January 11th, 1743. Boston, 1743.*

*Ministers and People excited to diligence in their respective duties, by the Consideration of their shortly putting off their earthly Tabernacles. A Sermon preached at Northfield, January 11, 1748, the day before the interment of the remains of the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Doolittle, Pastor of the Church there. Who died January 9, 1748, in the 54th year of his age, and the 30th year of his ministry. Boston, 1749.*

*An humble Attempt to give a clear Account from Scripture, how the Jewish and Christian Churches were constituted, and what Sort of Saintship is necessary in order to be a Communicant at the Lord's table. Endeavoured in two sermons preached at Deerfield June 24, 1753. Boston, 1753.*

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